

Theatre Australia

Dimboola — Film
Googie Withers returns
Bruce Myles

Nationwide Reviews including
film, ballet, opera, records,
books; National Guide.



Bedroom Farce



Wagstaff —
Actor
Producer



Miller —
Just the
Ticket

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NIMROD

Until Sunday
26 November
Nimrod Upstairs

A Visit With The Family

Greg Bunbury
director Richard Wherrett
designer Larry Eastwood
Lou Brown, Brandon Burke, Tom Farley, Gillen Jones, Margo Lee,
Miles Merton, Robert Northcott, Young

Until Sunday
19 November
Nimrod Downstairs

Old Comfort Kaffee

devised by Robyn Archer
directed by Ken Horler
design by Martin Sharp
Robyn Archer, John Gaden, Sharon Raschke, Jerry Wesley

From Saturday
25 November
Nimrod Downstairs

Gone With Hardy

David Allen
directed by Richard Wherrett
designed by Anthony Babool
Terence Clarke, Drew Forsythe, Henri Serpe, Kerry Walker

From Saturday
2 December
Nimrod Upstairs

JUMPERS

Tom Stoppard
directed by Ken Horler
designer Larry Eastwood
John Gaden, Barry Lovett, Walter Pym, Geraldine Turner, George
Whaley

Theatre Australia

November 1978

Volume 3 No. 4

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#COMMENT#

Subsidy for dreams...

Everyone agrees that somehow the arts should come first. After all it is the fruit of this creative ability which sustains culture, and positively responds to characterising our age, and adds it by the how to its art past-out of the bank?

The Australia Council Theatre Board has recognised that despite its high sounding principles it has more and more become just a paymaster and one increasingly of top-heavy administrative juggernauts. Rather like the Cash 22 of being in the news before you get the job, and having to have the job before you can join the union, many an artist has been excluded for not having the administrative ability to quantify his dreams in the required questionnaire. And so the big companies have had an in-built advantage with the result of an expansion of the existing rather than encouragement of the new.

The Theatre Board did keep an amount supposedly separate under the heading *Special Projects* — an umbrella term for "the rest" of those companies which didn't get in at first but established as an ongoing commitment. Thus for the time being the result of the annual application became a matter of life or death with the competition suddenly increasing.

On the other hand in addition to the without a corresponding rise in federal funds the (department) smaller groups now their grant pool diminished in long history to the established flow. In the past three years, for instance, whilst the big companies have been asking for at least an ordinal increase, the Council has been trying to cope with only half the inflationary increase of its funds and thus a decline in real terms. Whilst on the one hand such such could economic facts?

Two recent projects and a new experiment between a change in federal thinking. The first was the decision to withdraw funds from the Old Text — suggesting that the Council would no longer assist old, old, over-represented, companies, offering less and less artistic reward for proven and proven administrative expenditure. Their publicly held view that had Bill's union been accepted funding would have gone ahead suggests further that the Council is now concerned of the primacy of its own survival. This was indicated by their decision to back PACT, instantly and fully a company of artists for artists, despite an questionable prudence in an ongoing operation.

Now comes the new initiative which seeks both to give the artists the backing to act, and then those without becoming established as company structures, and at the same time provide flexibility in what backs like a steady state situation and achieving an in this.

The idea is to give interested users up to \$100,000 put to professionals or groups of professionals who wish to submit an on alternative of developmental programme of up to two years duration.

Limited time — as the programme is called — offers several advantages. First of all the subsidies are to be administered by an existing

art organisation for which a three per cent fee will be paid. This should ensure that the administrators have no power to sink the creative impulse into any danger of a new structure being created which may try to compensate itself.

Limited time allows artists to take leave of absence from existing commitments and not only higher possibilities otherwise denied to them but also to return personally involved with new ideas and visions for mainstream activities while the Board is on economic pressure calls (investment) normal based on personnel and product development.

Though projects may be significant income sources the concept is that local costs will be underwritten, with grants payments being reduced only by income actually achieved. This on the one hand flows from the concern with less difficult points but on the other ensures that the projects can be fully implemented as long as original budgeted expenditure is kept to.

Bob Adams, the Director of the Theatre Board sees the scheme as encouraging everything from a beyond-Arart multi-media total theatre to a Black in Africa type group or idea theatre to the multi-faceted and diverse of tomorrow — though it is not one of the ways to be too specific for fear of leaving the range of those put forward. But any project backed by well maintained professionals and bringing together the disparate areas of theatre of the Past, drama, dance and property, would not be an exception, but so to be a first runner.

Though an application has been put before the government for special funding it seems unlikely that it will be successful. If so the money to pay for it will have to be drawn from across the board over the period. We have been asked that this will not be a case of the Special Projects depleted coffers being raided again but it does mean that any proposals under the Limited Life Programme will be competitive with all other Theatre Board considerations.

The idea then is to get grants for projects to enable their dreams in the hope that if nothing else it primarily encourages them to let it throughout the following year. Certainly the Theatre Board despite the subsidy spend which so many of the major companies normalised once it was looking to box office success as a measure of success. It genuinely seems as if have the right to feel will be permanent.

Emphasis about taking high on cloud rate with a given amount grant could be made to the Australia Council.

And meanwhile the rest of us should begin looking out MP's to increase government spending on the arts and reduce the need for such schemes whilst an above an expanding statement after all someone still has to live the arts for a limited life to happen. Let's go to it.



Theatre Australia

Editor: Robert Page
Executive Editor: Lucy Wagner
Manager: Brad Rindling
Artist: Henry Cho

Advisory Board:

John Bell, Graham Barclay, Elton Beyle, Katherine Brabant, Yvonne Chelvey, Gordon Chater, John Clark, Michael Crosby, W.A. Edwards, Jack Hebbard, Ken Hooley, Garvie Hutchinson, Andrew Jordan, Philip Mason, Stan Meade, John Newby, Phil Power, Raymond O'Connor, Philip Pearson, Dennis Shanno, Ken Southgate, Raymond Stannley, Elizabeth Strevens, Maria Thurner, John Turner, Tony Tait, Clive Lee Woolly, Richard Whorrett.

Advertising:

Manager and Co-ordinator: Brad Rindling

Subsidiary:

Michelle
Rindling
821 822 4494

Publications: Media Resources Queensland

081 581 8170

Period: Patrick Corcoran (08) 264 1127

Contributors:

S.W.: Editors (08) 67 4470
Vic.: Raymond Barclay (03) 418 1204
Qld.: Don Barclay (07) 549 3434
W.A.: Sam Andrews (08) 599 6679
S.A.: Michael Morley (08) 275 2294

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“?QUOTES&QUERIES?”



Andrew Farrow by Alan Ayckbourn
Photo: Victor Gurneyman

his Blue and maroon.

From Farrow they will go on to Melbourne for a few days, Adelaide for another five days, Sydney for a week and heading up to Canberra. The whole thing will last for about five weeks."

MITCHELL AT THE PRAM

JOHN TIMLIN

"We're hoping Warren Mitchell will be coming to do some work at the Prime Factory in the beginning of next year. The first show we plan to do is for Prime Cares (David Platt Spill and his show, *Pratt's* from April). It's not absolutely definite yet because when a show originally done at the ICA in London is only run for an hour, for that's what it was designed to be, it's a little harder to pull together but neither we nor Warren have got over the obvious. Hopefully that show will be mounted by our entrepreneurial arm, Prime Factory Productions, to open it up as an art commercial venue in Melbourne and then have a set to night with our Warren Mitchell will play Farrow, and we hope to draw the rest of the cast from the APG."



"We hope too to get Frank Haskin to come out and direct it as far as the London production. We have also commissioned him to write a play about Ned Kelly's trial — following his *Upper Slope* — so he can work on that while at the same time we can say what other plays we may be commissioning in the future. I got the rights on them yet."

BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE 52M

KEITH DEMONPORE, Australian Ballet.

We have an appeal going with the idea of raising \$12 million dollars to establish a new headquarters for the Ballet. It will include studios for the Ballet and the Company space for set design and production administration and everything else. At the moment we're housed in a divided five warehouse and operations are squeezed through about 100 different buildings — although we're now based in the little hall company in the world."

The appeal has been going for some months now. It's going quite well but money is hard to

get these days and it's a little slower than we hoped. It will run to the end of the year then we'll be in a position to start our new building and start to about six months. We have purchased the site — behind the Victorian Arts Centre — which is a big step and things will go ahead one way or another. Whatever happens we have will supplement our actual income. We are one of the few theatre companies that is doing well, this year we've played more than 100 performances to over 90% houses, and we do keep over 100 people (student orchestra and backstage crew) partially employed in theatre."

The Government have been very generous too, the Federal Government has offered up to \$10 million dollar for dollar with state donations the Victorian Government has offered up to \$10 million dollar for dollar with donations within that state the Queensland Government has done the same up to \$10 thousand and we're waiting to hear from the others."

WORLD'S HIGHEST FREE ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMME

ROBERT KING CRAWFORD, Melbourne City Council.

"Free Entertainment in Parks began in 1972 with a \$1-600 budget now production programme and supply areas, and in the following five years the production have increased 300% and the areas to 22,500. There are three individual festivals each with its own concept and area of the performing arts which run for up to eight days. FEIP is an extension of the second Village Green evening plans for the community and an involvement in middle of the road entertainment. The programme includes almost every area of performing arts from opera to popular to camp shows and offers for almost every sector of the community."

FEIP acts as a showcase for the creative arts industry and is fully supported by the sectors involved. Artists appearing in the programme invariably get flow on backstage and where the programme is involved in giving amateur groups and young talent exposure it is also often a training ground to give them pre professional work. Most Melbourne City Council is the only Council entertainment operation that we know of that produces personal, personal concepts, advertising writers, directors, composers, choreographers, book designers, designers and composers in own programmes. A complete entrepreneurial operation for Douglas Fairbanks to James Edwards, Patrick Cargill and John Milgrew have all given their time and work free to the programme."

BEDROOM FAIRCE

PETER WILLIAMS

"It has been absolutely incredible we had seven hundred in the audience on the second night and our advance bookings have been over a thousand. There are twelve thousand seats booked already from advance party bookings. The only thing I would like to know is how to watch these party booking people do it. If I knew I'd be a millionaire."

We have had only the one publicity hit, when Carmen Duncan pulled her back out. You see in the play Barry Clayton has a bad back and Carmen has to help him up a few set changes, when she was helping Barry up the pulled her back out. Now on stage every night although Carmen is helping Barry, she's the one with the bad back."

PROSPECTING

DAVID BLANKINSHIP, Festival of Perth.

"As the season is about more than likely this the Prospector Theatre Company will be coming for a short tour to Australia, starting with two weeks in the Festival of Perth. They are being brought on by the Festival of Perth and C. M. Hocking of Melbourne. It will be a small company with two "mainstream" rather than actual plays. They are *The Lovers* and *The Play about Lord Byron*, which will start David Jacobs. Search of Search on the National Sydney Series, starring Timothy West and *The Passion* from Ben Strick. It's happening about the Festival Tour with the whole company. This includes Peter Gabor



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CATCH 22 OF THE

GORDON BEATTIE, Theatre of Youth and Education in the Riverina.

'I was formed in 1977 and got a Schools Commission Grant in February this year under the recreational grant system. This ran out in September and at the moment we don't look of the NSW Government is going to continue with funding in the new year. We want to be in a Catch 22 situation there, with the Education Department saying the responsibility of Arts, and recreation. This means that at the moment we're operating on a commercial level doing an Arts Council — type tour, performing to audiences of 150 children, which is not the kind of work we want to do at all. Our technique is one that operates with one class using performance, creative drama, simulation, game playing and above all participation, which you can't do with such large numbers. At the moment only the big schools can afford to look at, while the work we were doing before is especially related to the one and two teacher schools of which there are so many in the Riverina.

I do some drama in the Riverina C.A.E. so my capacity is mainly coordination and supervision but all the other roles jump on at teachers and now has taken leave of absence from college, and have therefore made financial and other sacrifices to do this work. If we don't get a grant we have to come to a decision as to whether to go on working in this way, or give up, or whether that's just one side thing. I've no idea what our chances are but I think the Education Department should take up its responsibility for the kind of thing.

THEATRE COMPANY FOR TOWNSVILLE

RIC NELSON, Director Summerfest Programme, Townsville Civic Theatre.



'In the past, due to physical radiation, lack of facilities, financial problems and by lack of interest the youth have been drawn to Townsville theatres. With the building of a new theatre

by the Townsville City Council and the urban population growth, the time appeared ripe to set wheels in motion. Indeed, we hope, to the establishment of a professional theatre company in North Queensland. While this stage is still an initial program of five productions has been devised, spread over a nine month period principally involving local amateur personnel.

The material has been selected with a strong awareness of the general lack of theatre going tradition within the community. The program will commence in November with Ray Lawler's classic play *Summer of the 17th Doll*. The remaining four productions will include a Shakespearean tragedy, a musical, a popular fable and a contemporary drama. Running concurrently with production periods are actor workshop programs will be initiated, aimed at developing local experience. It is hoped that we will be able to provide opportunities in Townsville not only with superior quality theatre but also with local productions of a high standard.'

WA TO USA

GEOFF GIBBS, Actor.

'I will be away from Perth for two years. I will be at the Ohio State University for the first twelve months teaching in the Theatre Arts Department. Their request was for an emphasis on Australian drama. Basically my plans are to learn and to experiment as much as possible in two areas — children's drama and summer stock. I will be right in the centre of the summer stock scene. While a lot of luck I hope to work on a company during the summer of 1979. The purpose of this has at the first time I have been for a long time that summer stock would be very available to Western Australia. We have an ideal regional centre on the south coast. Albany, which has thousands of summer visitors, I envisage an actor co-operative company being very successful there.

The other involvement I'll be following is in children's drama. I'll be attending seminars by Catherine Bayne Wells, University of Washington, Seattle and then coming to the post room in the Arts in Education Centre, Long Island under Professor Gailberg.

My preparation is enormous. But there will be many angles to be gained which will ensure my own development and be of advantage in teaching my students.'

BRILLIANT AUSTRALIAN MUSICAL

HEIL THINGDOO

'I recently directed the first production of a brilliant Australian Musical Comedy. The Comedy Cope which deserves far more than a short notice with a country Amateur Musical Group.

Written by John Sheahan and Charles. Perhaps with music composed by Len Puchner. It is an imaginative & musical entertainment of

040

circumstances which really happened in Provincetown in the 1890s, such as the break-up of the women's procession where there this claim was not, the marriage market, the corrupt importers of Colonial life and the subsequent consequences. The late John Weinman was always interested in the history of the early settlements, as together with Jonathan and writer Charles Phillips and composer Ben Plattberg, *The Colony Cage* was born. Charles had written several old books on early Provincetown and let us a well known Midwestern musician & composer, who have collected and several musicals out of which, Captain Lederer won the Elizabethan Theatre Trust's award for The Best American Musical. *The Colony Cage* is my favorite opera for the ladies and having done so I can not so much then could be achieved with professional facilities and I hope that such interesting contemporary will give me the construction of success. ⁷⁰

NOTICE: MISSED A NOTICE?

Abstract



Plasid
Plasid, Plasid & Plasid

This photograph seems to be the only moment of a one-man show which never happened: Noel Furry as Oliver Wilde. In June 1963, Furry announced he would be performing in a one-man show on Wilde. The production, devised by the late Jeff Ubbelohde (who wrote book and lyrics for the Australian musical *Bill of the Dog*) was to include excerpts from Wilde's lectures, stories and epigrams, selections from his plays and poems, with emphasis on *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

The first performance was scheduled to take place at the Assembly Hall in Melbourne on August 10, where it was to play her eight performances. If the show was successful, the intention was for it to tour other States.

Farrer even had a first night opening gambit arranged. He was to arrive at the Assembly Hall in a horse-drawn, lantern-lit, night train from 11 a. m. his guest of Widd, and walk straight onto the stage.

Whether Ferrer (or someone else) had the idea of doing the *Wilde* one-man show as a result of the success of *Michael*

Markus' answer was just revealed. He did indicate, however, that his handling of Wilde would be very different to that of the Irish actor's. At the time it was believed MacLennan had been approached to tour Australia with his programme. Had Forman gone ahead with his show, it obviously would have harmed any tour by Wilde in 1950 or '1.



1000

Sometime between the announcement by Ferrier of his plans and the August opening date, there came the news that MacLennan was definitely coming to Australia. So Ferrier decided to cancel his show. MacLennan is last heard of in Australia and New Zealand with *The Importance of Being Oleg* (June-March-August 1964), receiving great acclaim for his performance *wherever he went*.

It is interesting now to speculate how Ferrer would have fared in the role of Wilde, whether his career might have taken different turnings had he performed it. Meanwhile there exists this unique photograph of Noel Ferrer in the role he never played.

MITH LATTER DAY VIRTUES

SIMON CHILDERS, Director, MTC's
Academic and Film Arts

"Yes — peaceful. The version of another day — they're all here on this house. The gentle version that went out with candlelight and good movement and love music."

So says our Victor. I think, an accurate assessment of the spirit of this play, in which benevolent murder is two people (and) characters' absolute consent to the agony and thereby, in which a nephew and step-son in Tackie Rosevech dig the Panama Canal in the cellar and another (younger) nephew pursues the career of surgeon without knowing his wife needs personal pleasure. To me all this agrees with that notion of *Arms and the Man* grew from a workshop situation in which a team of successful clinicians, designers or even writers contributed their individual talents, toward creating a human world in which only the stars are remembered in its architecture, not the local, is a good measure, something and it's very, very funny.

MIME

11-20-2014 1:17 PM

Two residential in	5th	15th
Water & sewerage in	16th	30th

Brian Rosen and Peter Townsend, two marries from the Canadian Music Theatre which had such a successful tour of Australia in 1976, will be conducting these workshops.

Anyone interested is advised to enquire and/or enrol quickly as numbers are limited.

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LONDON SEATS

Henry M Miller's *Compendium* organisation, as far as set up in Melbourne and Sydney, can now tell you tickets to London Theatres. What a mess they are probably the second best seats in the house. I wonder if people in London can buy tickets to the theatre here?

WHAT NEXT REG?

The Rag Grandy Organisation after making a few dollars from merchandising during the not so recent A.B.H. tour, has acquired the merchandise rights to play Hollywood grunts in *Star Wars*, *Starwars Night Fever* and *Grease* and in essence the legend in his own words 'Dag Grandy'. That's right on Rag Grandy we thank for such things as badges, T shirts and posters relating to these moments in history of the nation. I hope that organisation too under way with the *Rolling Stones* organisation so that Mr Rag Grandy can start printing badges, T shirts and posters again. Only this time Mr Grandy will be a little more patronising, that subject is for the Gods. Well I can't wait to see the Sir Robin Highwaysmen badges.

ROGER WHIP

At a recent first night at the Marion Street Theatre in Sydney where it happened there were several celebrities and of course a sprinkling of Upper North Shore social set, one of the latter walked up to Mr Whip 'This is Your Life' Clapton and introduced himself 'Mr Whiplash' was it?

SAME-OLD STORY

Crating has started for a move to be made in WA early next year. A three hundred two of the boats will be sold in Sydney. The story line reads — two boats come up together in a morning town in the West. One of the boats dies tragically and the other buys a motorboat, masts, a grill and travels around the country side. Such adventures. The title for the action packed movie has not yet been decided upon, but I am assured that it will be as original as the story itself. I wonder if our boat's name will be *Bonanza*.

AT LAST REP

The Sydney based 444 Players, as off shoot of the 440 Drama School will be performing often in repertory at the 269 Playhouse at Miller Street, North Sydney (the old Independent Theatre). The plays will be on two or three days during the week, and every Sunday at 4 pm John Howard owner of the 440 Drama School and his 269 Playhouse has spent the last three

months in Europe and has returned to put on a variety review and an original Australian children's play. The 269 is not just for producers of the 440 or last, as Oliver Robb, manager of the 269 put it, it is a theatre for young professionals and no top selling for students. Any graduate from any Drama School in the country can come and spend several months in rep at the 269. To my knowledge this is Australia's only answer to rep. (I'd like to hear from you if there is anything similar anywhere else. I am sure we have quite a few theatre makers who would be interested to know also.

DAWN IS COMING

At this time last year production moved up on the feature film about the life of Dawn Fraser starring Tina Turner as Henry Goldfinger. Dawn's coach, Owen was to be released last April but for some unknown reason it was. Tom then appeared in episodes R to Z of Grandy's *Chopper Squad* which was taken off the air as several episodes P and now Tom is doing a solo play for the ABC called *Alley*, or the *Black*, which should be in air very soon. Days' longer Tom if *Alley* at the *Black* is covered for a while. I have it on good authority that this time Owen will be released in December and *Chopper Squad* will reappear on our screens about the same time.

BUSH THEATRE

I have received a letter from Eliza Willcock of The Bush Theatre Group informing us of their forthcoming production *Revolutions of Adjustment* by Tennessee Williams. Mr Willcock asked that we include the Theatre Group in the magazine of amateur companies but where do we put The Bush Theatre Group? The only clue to its whereabouts is PO Box 51 The Room 3134 and a contact number — 658 152 1842 and as the letter reads look us a lovely back setting.

SUFFRAGETTES?

What does a *Women's Film Worker* do? Well the Sydney Film Makers Co-op must have because they have just employed two — Jess Thomson and Susan Luskart. Jess was in a Mr Jon's film. Maudie received a *Comet* Unimark award and Susan film *See 40* will be released in December as the Co-op's debut in *Charingcross* Sydney. *See 40* is a film about the minute women's vote and change. I'll leave it to your imagination as to what Maudie is all about, but, if anyone can find me a size 10 measure — let me know.

OPERA HOUSE BOULBOON

The *Am Bess* Boulboon Company has produced a host of bouboon in the shape of the Sydney Opera House (you could have looked at which went on each last year. The purpose behind this idea is to provide funds for the Australian Opera. There will be a different scene each produced each year for the next five years and as Mr Peter Walker, *Am Bess's* public relations

representative says — "This will mean a total donation of 1.5 million dollars for the opera." For 1979 it will be a 4-ale bottle there will only be 1 000 made and they will go on sale in a few weeks for \$295 each. 1000 of this will be for the Australian Opera. In the U.S. a similar bottle was produced for the *Love Opera* sold for \$200 and in further months was worth \$1 000" said Mr Walker. So you'd better get in quick for these collectors' items.

NEW MOVIE

Bruce Beresford, one of Australia's better known film directors will be making *Breaker Morant* next year. Production will probably start some time in January. Bruce is thinking about bringing out a star from the U.K. but I hope he can find an Australian actor to fit the bill. Casting for the rest of the party should be well under way by now but knowing Bruce he probably knew who he wanted some months ago.

VERSATILE ACTRESS

Cindy Raymond, who is without a doubt one of the best actresses in the country, can be seen in *Military Ministry* which will open simultaneously in three screens through the country very soon and in *Prize Wears* tele movie, *The Plumber* early next year. Cindy is really overworking, she has teamed up with Ben Scott (her voice-over agent) so making a lot more close to be used in various capacities. The show consists of stage work and three (three) screen ones are undoubtedly probably the best screen actors around. Last month they completed a *Prize Action* commercial for which three hours of audio tape was filmed, just the show finished the job as it covered forty five minutes. *Prize's* commitments were very pleased.

Sent earlier for this column is Brad Kitching at the Management Office

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WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



I cannot recall spent so many sticky nights being locked around far away plays to be rung here as for *The Amplifier* which Gough Winters, John McCulloch and Frank Thring are now going to do. Last includes Anne Nagle, John Mills, David Browne, Vincent Pugh, Robert McPherson, Evelyn Williams, Hugh Gallatin, Constant Cummings, Peter Forster, Russ Abbott, Gail Gordon and — who at one time seemed the hottest female — Sylvia Loy. On Broadway it is Claudette Colbert and Rex Harrison. Apparently it needs the stars to run it.

One wonders though whether Rachel Roberts' joining, will be really necessary. She is an excellent actress, of that there can be no doubt. But I do not see her best effort as Australia for the *Red Apple* yesterday when all she was paid for was *Forster At Hanging Rock*. There are so many actresses around who could play the role as well as the *Travis Lady* and whose names would mean more to the general public. Offended I can think of Helena White, Carol Rags, Marie Lee, Julia Blake, Jacqueline East, Judi Farr — and there must be many many more. So why go to the expense of employing someone? Why does Ripa's constant mouthing "As *Chorus* Macmillan has pointed out when the play is good and the cast right it is not necessary.

How Gordon Chiles is likely to be approached to play the lead when *Producers on Parade* is staged next next year. Also that it is said has rights for Australia of *The Uncommon Ties* a comedy about love and death, which has Tim Blake Taylor running in London. His date is vague yet fixed for presentation here. Rumours that Henry Fonda, Burt Lancaster or Richard Burton likely to star in a play here next year. Sound like just rumours.

Wonder why Newland's production of *The Club* was such a huge flop on its return to Sydney's Theatre Royal. Have my doubts about the wisdom of launching a campaign to save the Maypole in Sydney, seeing that until within this year it has not been used as a fire escape since the early 1930s. After the warms last year at Perth and South Australia, Philipp Gony and his puppet show will be back from April to October next year through out by the Adelaide Festival people with the Victorian Arts Centre performing here at Melbourne and

Cliff Hocking in Sydney

Was invited to four openings on one night in September. MTC's *Good Wife Alano*, *The Minutes* at the Comedy and Hockley's *The Longest Walk* so many weeks of an Melbourne openings, one would have thought things could have been expanded better. It was I be good for the theatre with everyone young for publicity and first night coverage. As told Jon Furlong has been named in co-directorship by the Tasmanian Theatre for their projects a New Year's Eve theatre open in show in Hobart, presentation of the New York Drama Festival and the American play *Reddell*.

After seeing the recent production of *The Minutes* with one half devoted to this Newland, was reminded of the fact that one living in Melbourne is one of Newland's leading talent vocal coaches. David Dabney. Dave took over from Mary Ellis as the New York production of *For De Amplifier* three repeating history in his mother — opera and musical comedy star of the 1920s and 1930s. Deiner Ellinger — also replaced Hilary Ellis as the New York producers of *For More And Dances* last season. Additionally happen to be film and stage director John Schlegel.

Looks as if one of next year's highlights will be *The Prospector* Theatre at the Old Vic Company, starting as late as the Perth Festival and then to Cliff Hocking appearing in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Directed by Tammy Elton, the New York production of *For De Amplifier* three repeating history in his mother — opera and musical comedy star of the 1920s and 1930s. Deiner Ellinger — also replaced Hilary Ellis as the New York producers of *For More And Dances* last season. Additionally happen to be film and stage director John Schlegel.

It will be new setting, Michael Edwards back with the MTC after such a long time as *Once A Comedy* which will transfer to Sydney. Also back with the company will be Christine Ames and Bruce Rait and making his MTC debut Kim Deane who was in the film *The Getting of*

Whitewash and Learners musical *Reddell*

The play presented by Hockley at the Playbox. *Then Greatness Pleasure* is the first by D.M. Neely. Underlined his second *The Great Reddell* is being staged by Hockley early next year. Wonder what happened to the first.

What is the show that Australian general public would most like to see revived? *White Horse Act* if the talk back questions, while a leading theatrical and comedy institution on the ABC, are any good. Underlined the Adelaide Festival Centre. These three accepted Asia then rights to *PS Your Car Is Dead* the American play by James Kirkwood from his son of the same name. Not all of the stars of *Reddell* have apparently will be with the production when a commercial capital comes.

Cliff Hocking and John Dabney will be shown again to be back next February and March. Also in a great element of Australian film and I understand would not be adverse to appearing in one. Once upon a time in the late 50s and early 60s, General Moore—Hickson used to present annually as would be something outstanding in the Australian theatre. What happened to the idea? Is it there waiting, outstanding in the Asia then there's no more?

Levi's has been musical based on *The Merchant of Venice* Greek and called *Quemodo* is likely to be staged in the West End early next year. See Anne Nagle plays *Producers on Parade* in a production of *My First Love* beginning in English tour in Leicester on November 9. Hockley will be portrayed by Tony Blunt. And a recent production of *Reddell*—Hickson's. Five had Maria Latta, James Macmillan and Wilfred Hyde. What happened to the cast?

My source reports from New Zealand brings me news that Auckland's Mercury Theatre had a tremendous success in September with the Newland production of *Christine Ames* with Peter Carroll, so much so that, even performances had to be staged. And on November 1 the Mercury is presenting *Producers on Parade* by Robert Alderman with lead being played by Rob Gony who received New Zealand's Best actor of the Year award.

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LETTERS

Dear Robert,

Are other writers missing complete tables in efforts to stage playwrights submitted to the 1975 ANPC?

In my case manuscript was acknowledged in Nov 77 and notice of non selection received in early March 78. I am interested as to details of the Playwrights' Conference but what is the problem that affects the acceptance of a script? Why are they really unable to slip it into the scheduled ANPC and then across later box?

Confidence aside, would theatre companies, through Theatre Australia let signing writers know their attitude to condition of script?

eg: We don't want to know about them

We will read and return them promptly with a helpful covering letter

We pretend we want them but will return them unopened, and then only when the correct number of coffee rings and cigarette butts have been polished and the sun is red severely tinted. NB On no account will they be returned and at least four hours of mourning fury have been observed

Yours sincerely
Mary Smith
Austral, Vic.

Dear Sir,

I was recently contacted by someone called Douglas Planché (Creative Australia) I am tired of being subsidised companies in try out commercial plays. To me the second thought what I do is what London producers have done for years and what Australian producers should have done for years, which is to take plays from the upstart theatres and tour them commercially in a very simple arrangement. The subsidised theatres benefit in many ways as they get their production used in other areas and they get a percentage of the gross with no risk which can amount to quite a substantial amount over a long tour and helps offset their original production costs. I give a risk income plays like *Once Upon a Time in a Caravan* which may not seem all that commercially viable because I couldn't be bothered promoting outside the walls of the other commercial companies in this country so I don't need the high helpings of tour production costs

Yours sincerely
William Mackay
Parachute Productions
Melbourne, Vic.

Dear Sir

I am getting tired of the complaints of offended commercial managers such as Parachute Productions and The Federal Theatre who feel guilty about wanting to make money. I would see but let a pro. I'll be

Marking thanks for "betting the second thought" by crying "bad" in ANPC and "they do it in London" in ANPC. He has told them he has mixed my pure story for ANPC. I know they do it in London and I know you are taking some risk but neither of those is enough to justify the use of public money from one company to another, and look what happened to them. The argument that the only way you can make subsidised theatre working is by making a company in the market place is like the argument heard recently that public theatre should be turned over to your income. If commercial companies are the only way to make subsidised theatre interesting then it's not working. And I'm sorry Mr Marking (who probably, as he claims, doesn't promote subsidised work) to face the "bureaucratic" of paying for the production the time

Yours sincerely,
Douglas Planché
Brooklyn, NSW

Dear Sir

The September/October 1977 issue of *Theatre Australia* featured an article headed "Musical Theatre in Australia" by Terry Stedman

I am anxious to obtain as many manuscripts of Australian musicals as I can lay my hands on and hope you can refer me to some one from whom I can acquire information which will lead me to them, perhaps the author himself. I am especially interested in Australian musicals suitable for school productions

Yours faithfully,
Daniel D Brown
Harrowood High School, SA 5781



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One of the first problems to confront Stuart Wagstaff in his new role as producer was a suitable venue to stage his play in Sydney. He had been sitting on the rights to the successful American comedy, *Fathers Day*, for some time and a full year. Finally the pieces started to fall together and a new production team was born when Stuart went into partnership with Louis Van Essen. "I wanted the Royal. It's a nice theatre, seats the right amount of people and is fairly profitable. But it works out very expensive. Getting finance and private investors when you have no track record is hard enough, let alone paying out \$40,000 a week for a theatre."

So what happened then?

"Well we finally settled on the Mayfair, which was in a state of despair. Hayn, who owned the building then, were marvellous, they did up the backstage area and the dressing rooms. It's like a real theatre again, which of course it was some forty years ago."

Why did he choose an old film theatre in the first place?

"What other theatre in the centre of town is there? Her Majesty's — too big and wrong and old town. The Seymour Centre — you've got to get out to go and see the play, there's no passing trade. The Royal — well as I've said, too expensive. Then of course, there's the old Elizabethan at Newtown and we can forget that."

So the Mayfair it was and a whole new life for Stuart Wagstaff. The Sydney run was as successful as Wagstaff could have hoped and the play then moved to Melbourne in October for six weeks. After that it's off to Newcastle, Canberra and Brisbane. As I write negotiations are under way to stage *Fathers Day* in Adelaide and Perth. To Stuart sometimes it is all like a dream.

"I'm only a producer by default really, because on other management would do *Fathers Day*. It doesn't read well. But I know I was right," Stuart reflects.

"I wanted to do something like this twelve years ago," boasted Harry M Miller. Happy because twelve years and twelve million dollars later he has come around to the theatre as efficient looking service. "The only unfortunate thing about it," he said, "is that I have probably sent some poor little man who used to number and collect theatre tickets, out of his mind."

The idea behind Computicket is to make it easy for theatre goers to purchase a ticket to the show they wish to see and to all producers by increasing attendance. Computicket opened in Sydney late in August this year and at last count there had been a "twenty per cent increase in theatre attendance."

The way it works is that by going to your nearest Computicket outlet (and there is soon to be one in all city suburbs) you can buy a ticket to the show you wish to see and have it on your hand as you leave. There are no blocks of seats allocated to each booking office which means it is first in first served for the best seats in the house and you do not have to race into the theatre box office and queue for this

SPOTLIGHT

Producer's Day

Stuart Wagstaff talks to Barry Eaton

And what of the future? "Now we're making money. If we make enough to repay our investors and make a small profit, then I can produce again. At the moment my future as a producer looks bright, if I can find the right play."

How does he see himself as a producer? "Too easy, if you're to actors," he grins. "It's very hard to switch from being an actor one day to becoming a producer the next." Will he keep on performing himself? "I would like to think that I could gradually phase out from being a performer and phase into being a producer in the Kerm Frenchish style. But I don't think I will, or deep down that I want to really. I enjoy pushing my luck onto a stage or a television screen. I like it and I make a lot of money at it, which is attractive."

However Stuart would dearly love to have his own theatre to stage what he wants. Not necessarily his own productions at the time. He would keep in touch with all the theatres in Australia, and if he found a good play, bring it into Sydney as happens in England: it would have a strict policy of comedy.

"Apart from the Music Hall, this doesn't exist here," he says. "If you go to a particular theatre in London, you know the sort of entertainment you are going to get. I would love to have the Comedy Theatre. If people go there they know there's a laugh, a comedy or something that's entertaining. I don't want to obscure the public, suggest their minds or put on the chains — I just want to

entertain them."

Wagstaff sees himself as joining a band of middle range producers, an important in this country. While the Blockbusts are always assured of a future, the smaller producer has to fight harder to survive. It's all a matter of attracting and keeping the right investors, according to Wagstaff. Blockbust, apart from being clever and keeping his finger on the public pulse, has always looked after and comforted investors, still the same ones he started with thirty odd years ago.

"That's exactly what I'd like to do too", he says very firmly. "All Factors Day makes money, my shows do. So from now on, the first offers will go to my present backers. They are my team if they want to be, I don't care if God comes in with a million dollars. I would give the little lady down the road who put in her thousand dollars, first offer."

He plans to visit London to see two shows in particular, in which he is interested. But like a savvy producer he is keeping his options and his eyes open. One of the shows is for Stuart himself to appear in — Donald Sinden is currently doing the part on the West End. (It was only because that the play in question is the first, *Shut Your Eyes and Think of England*, which opened at the Apollo about twelve months ago.) Apparently there have been many enquiries at the box office whether Stuart was appearing on *Factors Day*, so he has decided to star in a future production.

"There is obviously an audience for me,



Stuart Wagstaff

which sounds slightly transparent", he says modestly, "but it's also a fact." But Stuart says he is doing two weeks work at the moment and if he were to undertake a play, it would restrict his activities. Does he need some outside influence to force this current? "Yes, it's the old actor's syndrome of accepting offers because you need the work. I find it impossible to say no to an offer of work — because it might be the last one."

What are some of the benefits of being a producer?

One of the greatest joys was to conduct auditions so that the actors had some dignity and didn't have to wait on weeks for an answer. I told them at the outset if they were not right, which I think they appreciated. Also the other joy of raising someone, telling them they were wanted and hearing the reaction at the other end."

Harry Miller's Computicket

Brad Keeling

provide. For instance last month in Sydney the forthcoming Bette Midler concert tour went on sale one Monday morning and these concerts were sold out by 1.20 that afternoon. Two more concerts have been sold out since then. There were no queues, no rush into the city and no hard feelings towards the promoters.

Computicket is the promoters' dream. There is no need to stoop to the low tricks they had used in the past. For example tickets going on sale at one outlet only and taking people to the nearest of publishers they were getting from Lane, queuing for days outside the box office, or cutting the number of concerts down because they could not be sure how many people would attend or rather how many people would be bothered to queue for tickets.

At last these problems have been overcome and promoters can speculate on the number of concerts they will need to

put on without having to be so ill-served to their clients, their bread and butter — the concert goers.

The Computicket system was developed in the USA by Computer Services Inc. and has been operating in South Africa since 1971. "I nearly brought the system here three years ago," said Harry M. "but there were still some bugs I wanted sorted out. I wanted to bring to Australia a system that was highly sophisticated. He has done just that."

The Harry M. Miller organisation has moved into more prominence in William Street in Sydney while there is an alternate power source in case of any sort of power failure: and, as Harry M. says from his seat on the twenty second floor "my computers have the best view in Sydney. The staff of the Computicket set up is a highly polished and very professional team. People like Donald R. McDonald



Harry Miller

Derek Morris, Suzanne Anderson, and of course Harry M. Miller who have a lifetime of experience in the leisure industry.



Zygmunt Molik. Photo: Mac Latta

Zygmunt Molik — Grotowski's leading actor

Exclusive interview with Jeremy Ridgman

Zygmunt Molik, leading actor and founder member of Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory in Poland, has been in Brisbane, conducting a series of workshops with acting students at Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education. Such a visit, spread over two months and forming part of the students' training in turn for a member of the Laboratory. I spoke with Molik in the presence of Boleslaw Trykian, head of Kelvin Grove's Acting Programme and began by asking him what was the purpose of his visit.

"I am trying to conduct work on voice and body in actor's training. There is a kind of human search. A lot of people are like like seekers in the same sense that a lot of people are job seekers. A lot of such people we can find in acting schools because I know that everybody must have, at a certain time in his life, a kind of guidance, if not, he is like a feather on the wind, going to and fro, and not like a firm tree that can stand with the wind but must finally rooted in the soil. It is my saying, sometimes, that to be an actor, first of all you must be a man."

Did the work at Kelvin Grove have a particular aim or mind, a performance or a presentation? "The goal is not to reach a result, our goal is to be in the process of finding. However, at the moment I am almost sure that it will be possible to give some special performances."

"A lot of very simple, hard work is necessary on our body and our sound. We must be sure of ourselves, because we move on very uncertain terrain. We must be strong, because any step we take we meet with the weakness, that is, us ourselves. We must be independent of our body because we depend on so many factors, powers outside. So we must be ready, in the smallest detail, to be able to go forward without unnecessary tensions or contractions, to go forward with an open throat and even without unnecessary movement. Only what has to be done must be done."

What did he require then of the actors he was working with?

"That everyone should come in with a

kind of expectancy for something very peculiar in their life — that something can happen that is out of the ordinary. Only it is up to us to make the first step in this expectancy, in this peculiar waiting. So we are not waiting by doing nothing, but waiting by doing certain things, with the whole of our being, even if we do the simplest physical exercises, they can not be done in a glib, easy way."

Molik is sceptical about the notion of technique. It is something which "comes with practice — you don't need real experiences for that. The first goal is to meet each other. But the second is to come out of this mediocrity, this everyday life which is so often constraining: everyone knows it but he doesn't know the way out, how to open new doors for himself, doors which have been closed so far. And to do all that, not in a very general, as to speak, search, but to do all this on the tough ground of hard work on the voice and body, that is the point of our meetings."

Would he see theatre then as a way of coming out of mediocrity, as a heightened form of being? "It is, sometimes, unfortunately, in recent days, not too often."

I was interested in the connections nowadays between his work and the seminal ideas of Grotowski.

"Whatever I am doing," he told me, "whatever someone of our group is doing, it is all influenced very strongly by Grotowski: we are rooted simply in that soil. Whatever I do, I know that I am on my own, everything has to be mine. But I know that without these roots all would be quite different."

How far had things developed then in the twenty years since Grotowski formed his Laboratory and the ten or so years since his ideas crystallised in *Towards A Poor Theatre*? "Entirely. Every year we have tried to find new responses to new questions that were put before us, and of course, before Grotowski himself." He agreed with Trykian's suggestion that the Grotowski Theatre had been through a number of "lives" in the past twenty years, each new theatre "having its roots in and being the extension of the theatre that was ending."

Grotowski refers to two types of actor, the "conscious actor" and the "body" actor. How, I asked, did he interpret the distinction, in the light of his own experience? He thought deeply for some time. "You know the story of Saint Mary Magdalene?"

Pointing Molik is wary of theorising about theatre and puts more faith in practice and the act itself than in the attempt to explain. "There are others who explain things. Very often we do things that we don't know in full, we might only have a hunch. Later we read a book, a good book and find the phenomenon described very precisely. It is just that I can not do things that I have already read about before. I must do things in my own way and later I will find an exact description of what I was doing."

And what of "magic" in the theatre? Was there such a thing?

"The magic comes or it doesn't, and you must do simple things."

MYLI

Pamela Ruskin

He's a little bloke with unremarkable features. His hair has retreated to the point where you can't even describe the effort at achieving a very high forehead. To compensate perhaps, he seems at long enough to touch his collar, faking straight and back the weary side or other-framed glasses, a flat, peaked Dutch cap has become his hallmark. His voice is soft, well-modulated but it can and does, dominate a stage. As an actor, he is decidedly low key. Think of Sir Henry Irving or the powerful oratory of Orson Welles and then go as far as you can in the opposite direction and you arrive at Bruce Mylins.

He says that "I've been criticised often for the low key profile but I think of it as effective". In 1973 Mylins played the important role of Tim in John Power's rugged play *The Last of the Knowlises* for the Melbourne Theatre Company. He played it superbly, a quiet, strong interpretation of the role as a very successful, hard-working, tough gang of men, working on a mining project in the north of Australia. He was the great of the play, the contribution to the rest of the breeding work. He played it again in a return season the following year and was all set to go with it, with most of the original cast, in America for a Broadway season, when it all fell through. What happened? "I almost had my ticket, it was to close. The Australia Council had given \$50,000 but we didn't get the rest of the backing. The Americans wanted \$10 million."

"I suppose," I said, "You're playing Tim again in the film that's being made of it?" "No" and Mylins "Why not?" "I wasn't asked," he says, simply, accompanied by the benevolent rather wistful smile that is part of his charm, on stage and off. I find this almost impossible to believe. I once had it hard to imagine anyone else in the role, but Bruce says that he's never

WA Playwright problems

Katharine Brisbane

Perth Playhouse director Stephen Barry has found himself in a hot seat over the WA sesquicentennial celebrations planned for next year.

Being a forward-thinking man he sought and received his board's approval earlier this year to commission works from the two best-known WA bred playwrights, Alan Seymour in London residents and (Dorothy Hewett) now living in Sydney. The name of Seymour's commission was removed without drama by local operators, despite the fact that he has lived abroad since 1960. But Ms Hewett's was another matter.

The effect of the Hewett name upon the

STONES

Bruce Myles

John offered a film role and it is difficult to break into the rather tight circle of the New world "Afrasia" I say!

At the moment, he is involved in the directing role of the Melbourne Theatre Company. While John Sumner is obvious this year, Ray Lawler has been in charge of the company and Bruce and Nick Rodger are Assistant Directors, which hasn't kept him off the stage. He played an excellent Richard III earlier in the year, one of his favourite roles. He has, however, found a good deal of satisfaction in directing, though "I prefer acting — if the right role comes along." He directed the very powerful play, *Departmental*, and when I talked to him was just beginning rehearsals as director of Bertolt Brecht's *Antony & Cleopatra*.

"It's an interesting engagement for me because I played in it for almost three years in Britain. I played it first in Glasgow in 1965. My son was born during that run. Then it went to the Edinburgh Festival, and later to the Saville Theatre in the West End in 1968." He says that his productivity wasn't very much to the cost in which he appeared, but it does give him the advantage of being thoroughly familiar with the play. "Kino Carpenter's designs are very simple very effective, I hope, and take a right away from the British production." I ask him if he's had any trouble casting it and if he has complete freedom in this area?

"When Ray Lawler and I were choosing the company for the year, we took each other's plays into account and then cast them within that framework. I wanted Edwin Hodgman for *Antony* and Ray wanted him for *The Playboys of the Western World*. In fact, the reason was based on our cast needs for the two plays with the biggest casts. *Under Milkwood* and *Antony & Cleopatra*."

What are Bruce Myles' strengths as a director? He thinks for a moment and

smiles gently. "I suppose after twenty years as an actor, you could say I'm an actor orientated director. I see things from the actor's point of view and I see the potential of each role this way too. I've directed plays with themes that interest me. These themes are power and its misuse and tyranny as it is counted. Experimented set within a police station was about power and its misuse and at different levels, to see *Antony* and another play it in directing after that, *Antony* by James Saunders, which will open at the Russell Street Theatre next year, from January 23rd to March 17th. They are very different plays." John Sumner saw *Antony* in London and said that it was a play that the MTC should do.

Myles' production of Brecht's *Antony & Cleopatra* will be the first staged in Melbourne. He describes it as "a political satire, almost a pantomime on Hitler. It is about the kind of people we allow to be our leaders. It is based on a cultural rift. In Germany in the thirties, the cabaret was where you could see very witty and bitter put downs of the Nazis. Most of the actors in them were killed off. You saw it on the film, *Cabaret*. It is set in Chicago in the Thirties, and there is a small-time musician, on the Al Capone model who gradually takes over the city, but you find among his supporters all types, the recognizable figures of the ruling Nazi thugs in Germany, Goebbels, Goering and so on. Through this drama, you see the rise of Hitler up to the time of the Anschluss."

Bruce Myles also produced, *I Ship My Chinaman* which was a Ministry of Dely Thomas for Melbourne Theatre Company Productions in September. "They are important because they give a new playwright or a not very experienced one a chance to see what works and what doesn't — to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a play." I ask him if there is ever a chance for such plays to be given a full production later. "Certainly there is. At the moment, there are three Theatrebox productions being considered for a full season. One had a work at Russell Street and two were Sunday night workshops."

Radio was Myles' introduction to acting,



Bruce Myles. Photo: Tony Watts

starting off in 1955 and then going into live theatre at the Independent in Sydney. He spent ten years after that in England and America and joined the MTC first in 1973, playing Miss Eliza's *Providence*. When in Perth as well as the *Koorumbi*. Perhaps his most famous role in Melbourne has been that of Barney in Lawler's *Doll Trilogy*. "Basically I'm an actor, and the directing is just a cooling off period. If *Antony* doesn't work, I'll just disappear into limbo." Although *Richard III* and *Antony* which he played at the Salisbury Playhouse in England are his favourite roles, he takes modern plays — modern Australian plays that relate to the problems of his today.

For all his quiet manner, Bruce Myles is an enthusiastic, albeit a tongue-in-cheek one. I ask him about the things he'd still like to do and he says, with only the glimmer of a smile, "I want to do more directing, a state administrative work. I want to make a film myself and I want to make a television series of my own." He looks me in the eye and again the mischievous smile. "I also want to win Wimbledon and captain Australia in the Tests." This most sensitive of actors returns to the reality of a Brecht rehearsal that is waiting for him and napping has peaked up on foretell leaves me and his Walter Mitty dreams behind him.

business for the Playhouse than the plays before and after it.

The situation has been aggravated by the fact that Stephen Barry now had himself drawn into two playwrighting competitions with which he was not connected at the time of the commissions: the 150th Anniversary Play Competition with prize money of \$7,000 and the Henricus Drake Bookman award donated by the Mosman No. 3 rate relief committee with a first prize of \$3,500. Both competitions have the same entry qualifications.

Widely held objections by prospective entrants are that both Henricus and Seymour are obliged to enter both competitions and indeed might have won; and that few Perth residents will be asked to support the production of four new plays in 1975 — an unrealistic demand. And that Barry is certainly in charge of the destiny of all four plays.

Barry says that the Playhouse has a primary obligation to Henricus and

Seymour. Their commissions had come out of Playhouse funds (not \$5,000 each as *The Australian* had stated) but neither half that figure between them and only the quality of the finished scripts and any political pressure would determine their public presentation next year. The details he had seen so far indicated him that the Playhouse would put its money's worth.

Lack of communication is what seems to be at the bottom of the current mess. The 150th Anniversary winner should have been announced on September 10 and it is not certain even now who the judging panel is — apart from Barry Myles. The workshops will be a start in the right direction. And as for Mr Henricus it is four years or so since Perth saw a play of his — who knows, they might even like *The Men from Mankabaka*, as it is presently called. Either way Barry remains determined and undaunted. A familiar thirer by those in the line of fire used to often at direct and bar work.

passions of Perth people has not gone unnoticed over the years. According to Barry's experienced old ticks at the Koorumbi Club who have never read a word of her work are counted to verbal violence at its mention. These views have been enhanced by conscientious correspondence from Mr Hewitt's former husband and his wife to editors, interviewers, bookshops, library and theatre periodicals, alleging Myles and threat many legal actions.

The public announcement last August of the two commissions brought on an attack of *Archie*. The WA art magazine putting the case that the public money so far invested in Dorothy Hewitt had not produced the prototype Australian play, and claiming — quite wrongly — that production of her work at the Playhouse, the Opera House etc had been less other directors (Barry has cautiously done his homework and says their production of *Don Juan* and *Antony* for *Daily* had been



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JACK HIBBERD
looks through a literary lens at the making of

Dimboola Play to Film

'The Brutal Vulgarizing Director Versus the Creative Writer. Heigh ho!' **Tim Burstall**

It has more than once been pitifully observed that Hollywood is a graveyard of good writers, that cinema, because it is also an industry, lacks too studiously to assume all the characteristics of an intellectual workshop at a board room of highly expedient and nervous executives. Gore Vidal, beloved by all cineastes, deflected his experience of screen writing in a form of indoor sport.

I must promptly record that my experiences in the long evolution of *Dimboola* screenplay were precisely the opposite — that is, upward the rejection of my third draft by the Australian Film Commission, when the creative ball game and its tact rules appeared suddenly to change and to the extreme, maintained above but to a degree that could only cause some confusion in a writer previously used to almost total control of his material.

These changes seemed partly a response to a dramatic practical situation, partly the growing manifestation of a relative lack of faith in my capacity to wholly write a comedy screenplay that would both work and attract funds (they are not necessarily the same) partly an investment of new faith in the director to achieve both these sometimes conflicting aims. I might add that the production company, Prism Factory Productions and its film unit, was naturally acting within its formal rights in these matters, merely exercising proper judgement.

The importance of a film's screenplay is self-evident, but it should always be seen as a variable factor in the film-making process — far more so for comedies

than in stage drama." — Keith Connolly

I commenced work on *Dimboola* the film in early 1976 with the assistance of a synopsis and character library for the AFC. On the basis of this, Prism Factory Productions received and administered a Script Development Grant to enable me to elaborate a screenplay.

The real television started in May 1976. Right from the beginning I was determined not to lose the screenplay simply and directly on the play, which I strongly felt related too directly on the physically combined social occasion, audience participation and purely theatrical means, for feasible filmic translation.

The first draft was completed later that year and dispatched to the AFC. It was not greeted with applause. Understandably so, for it was working, without special style, dramatically diffuse, excessively loquacious, and overfilled of all, not seriously funny. It was a mistake to send it off. No one has ever clapped eyes on the first draft of one of my plays.

This draft was to reinspect the first leap (in a journey away from the play) I had to gradually and painstakingly get a cut of my system. Initially I did this by expanding in time, by depicting events leading up to the completion and some immediately after it, by creating a new series of characters and even introducing some from the play (eg Mavis, the wife of Harry, who is now a fallen soldier) and recorded in an ironic counterpoint to the central couple.

Unlike gun manufacturers or codgers who make a cruel expensing device,

none for run down past televisions in Albany you are all about unchangeable dreams.

—David Baker

In January of 1977 I returned to the desk, brushed my creative teeth, and had a surgical look at it all. After some weeks of rumination I came up with the simple kernel idea of an outsider, an entirely fresh outsider, an Englishman, an author, poet, and Oxford don, who I centered to be on his first visit here with the purpose of observing and recording in a more the idiosyncratic customs and life of the local folk. His very first experience, substantial sustained experience of Australia, was to be a few days in my imaginary *Dimboola*.

Irony in the conception, substance and life of Vivian Warrack-Smith-Jones was the notion that he would achieve, in his Englishness, contrast ironically and dramatically with the Australianness of the town that his sometimes strained, sometimes strained sometimes applied, responses to the individuals and events would render the community fresh and unique (about it once with a direct anthropological perspective).

To the function of my mind was an intense desire to avoid all the mundane, mundane, mundane concerns of a *Red Dye* unbridled and sprinkled with large comic events, gratuitous gags, and other concerns. I wanted an ungranted comic vision of an equatorial town where men conform and extremely veritably flourish in the first context of conforming social forms.

Once inflated by the percentage of

John Duigan and Jack Hibbard. Photo from the Warrack-Smith-Jones' by Geoff Ward

DUIGAN



HIBBARD



The silencing of Dumbbells by the women at the "Official Table"
Photo: Geoff Polatin, *Norfolk Leader*

Worcesterhire-Jones, his comic nature and dramatic talent, the second draft found more blatantly "Character" assumed a more distinct life, the action tightened, there was a more coherent and rooted interweaving of comedy, gravity, and fantasy. Though still a little too long and at times dramatically misdirected or narratively clumsy, *Pawn Factory Productions* felt confident enough to call for direction.

The response was not overwhelming; it had been decided to appoint the director on formal and informal consensus to the screenplay at this stage. Some directors seemed to feel this an unending task, that he or she should have instinctively been chosen at the right one. The rationale for this procedure was simply that recent Australian cinema seemed to lack a little in the comic department, that it was imperative to talk to a range of possible directors and respond to their ideas, or lack of them.

The Producers and Directors Guild of Australia in Melbourne at one of its monthly meetings, again meetings recently debated the question of content and its basic human enrichment or commercial considerations? It was not much of a success.

—David Baker

We cracked two directors. John Dupuis was presented with the golden goon, Dupuis has other task of experience as a director or engenderer of comedy. He spoke briefly, persuasively, logically, of approaches to filming the script, and won the day, even if his proclivities were likely to the side of sobriety and satirism.

It was then decided that we, myself, the director, and Miss Gohren (executive producer), sat down and do some further work on the script. In consent we shortened it, tethered it together a bit more, raised enthusiasm, confounded and telescoped scenes, incorporated expert cinematic advice. The result of these tests, though not absolutely final, was more than acceptable in spirit and direction to all those involved. Only the director at this stage seemed perturbed by instances of comedy or satire, eg. the heroine of a native flagellated by a misbegotten woman, a death scene, an impossibly obnoxious telegram boy, a vagabond posing on a log of driftwood and his mate unconsciously drowning it with rich much before a river scene in which a draught horse flagellated by a female jockey went a sprint. Some of these were compromised on and directly debated.

The resultant third draft was sent off to the AFC, not with a lot of confidence, as there was a general air of distrust about the fate of comedy at the AFC, a fear that they would reflexly slot it into the category of crude and detached "joker" comedy. Our fears were vindicated. Two of the "assessments" were merely indecisive (this, full of mock-buffery and hammy glances, delivered by people patently incapable of or above basing comedy. It was felt that, if made, *Dumbbells* would not back the Australian Film Juggernaut by 4-5 years, that it would bewitch Australian cinema if it ever landed cinema. The third assessment was favourable: felt that the script needed shortening and further cinematic refinement before being ready

for production. One out of three is not enough, and the AFC rejected *Dumbbells* as an uncommercial proposition.

"I believe directors should be encouraged to script and valiantly committed to change it — if they think it is the right thing to do."

—Tim Bortell

The result of the AFC were generally held to be preposterous. An air of gloom, temporary paralysis, and even panic, prevailed. The ramifications of the AFC decision on the subsequent fate of the script were substantial and fairly unresolvable, that decision, for good or for bad, in effect ended and undermined my position as writer central to the project. Instead of insistently following the advice of the third assessment, it was felt that something more radical, even drastic, was required.

Critical characters characters who to me were essential to the drive, path and amplitude of the film, now came under threat. The life of Worcesterhire-Jones now hung in the vaguest balance. Should he be engaged or amalgamated with Shovel-brother-super, band-conductor and composer, local historian, house and cyclist, extended to a word soulmate and Australian character committed to the Englishman who could be returning to *Dumbbells* after some ten years absence or even a filmmaker there for the weekend? Marion and Rayson (possible father of the goon), two rival vagabonds and passers as well as DUT delivery (nuclei of the broke and dispossessed crop duster) also came under threat. The purpose of these three characters, who instinctively seem to me on *Dumbbells* over the first few days, was to

Break May (Shovel) and Barry Smith (New Perry) in the film of *Dumbbells*.

Photo: Pouch Hawkes





Bruce Springsteen (left) and Mickey Rourke (right) on the set of *Overboard*. A (From Factory Pictures Production Photo: Parviz Harkins)

be a counterpoised dynamic force able to make *Overboard* the center of a cinema cosmos. The arguments against this were that these mad gleeful journeys, as motorcycle and in plane didn't conform with suburbanite beliefs and that pure tasting the film with shots of them was uninteresting.

This period of discussion and negotiation continued for a while, some sub-plots and counterplots became weakened or taken, while some were fruitfully directed out and strengthened. These strengthening, while important in themselves, did however go hand in hand with entertainments and requirements of the original broad comic world of the film.

The "Author" argument I used in the Symposium discussion is that the director is responsible for everything that goes into a film including the script. It is his sure a red rag to most writers.

—Tim Burtall

Somewhere around this time Greater Union offered substantial support for the project, based on the third draft I believe and representations by the producer John Winkley. Also around this time the director, unsupported by the producer complex, began to re-write, re-structure, re-screen and add new written material of his own to the screenplay. These versions, not mere handlings angled towards the acquisition of funds were largely what the director wanted to write and shoot. Two of these versions gained funding from the VFC and MWWC. From a position of relative impotence, I replied with screens of my own, in an absurd game of

ping-pong in which one of the bats was loaded.

In a final script session, at my own arrangement, I argued successfully for the reinstatement of some things that had been lost, was compromised on others, and bargained away others again. The cinema as art, trade, and power. Not the sort of business for the sensitive artist, particularly at the trading balance and the majority of fiscal corporations are against it.

I had always intended to be actively, positively, involved up until the shooting script stage, then leave the director, editor etc. to their own creative films. In fact, however, I was fortunate enough, however, in the *Overboard* project to be allowed to take a part in coming and to attend as much of the "shoot" as I wished. Needless to say, the general reluctance of the film industry to encourage the attendance of a writer at filming is one of the most primitive and primitive business practices in the art. How else can the writer acquire a working knowledge of those unique cinematic qualities which are so often used in argument against him? Unless of course there is a lot of delicate and emotional bullshit thrown around. Anononon opened that you really only needed to know two or three french rules to make a film. I just knew that someone is going to say that his films show it.

The film was shot in a remarkable few weeks, with the inexhaustible and generous drive of an enthusiastic film and production crew with the unstinting open support of the *Overboard* townspeople, in the face of protesting, gag days and a wet

winter. The responses to open sessions of readers were generally adulating, but reports consistently confirmed fine quality.

At the time of writing (early September) the editor, director and producer ensemble are duly basked over the *Movieola*, chanting I believe, then rapping and glowing in a gay frenzy, such is the abundance and range of critical. Positive reports look out. Let's hope they are radiated on the magically flickering screen, for the project, especially in the last half, was a bewildering, contradictory and often painful one for this particular writer.

"To lose a writer in your script, I know, Jack, is like losing a limb or a child. I have never yet known a writer yet who has been happy to let go as a film."

—John Winkley

"Today I'd be happier. The film was to be made of something of mine I'd be honestly and madly madly underfoot producing the home product so that it wasn't delivered, decorated, blown up, ground, "interpreted" by some mechanic and his gang of mechanics."

—Hal Porter

"It is easy to achieve proficiency and professionalism at a technical level — we've done that for years in our television commercials — but to make significant films you need courage."

—Philip Adams quoted by Keith Connolly

NR All the quotes in this article, except those of John Winkley, are taken from "Tropics on the Reef", *Overboard* No 7).

Mike Gillies (left) and W. F. Frakes (right) in *Overboard* — (for credit in *Overboard* a Paramount Pictures Production Photo: Parviz Harkins)



Google

After six years away from the Australian stage, Google Withers will be returning to the scene of former triumphs when, on November 29, she opens at Melbourne's Comedy as William Douglas Home's *The Kingfisher*. The season is scheduled to last eight weeks, followed by a similar period in Sydney.

Miss Withers — as Google — is automatically referred to by everyone — will find a very different theatre atmosphere to those days in the early and mid-thirties when she was virtually First Lady of the Australian stage. Commercial theatre has very nearly disappeared, and with it much of the kind of starchy glamour and sparkle Google provided.

Many of those who packed performances of a Google Withers play obviously will want to recall old memories. Younger theatre-goers, to whom she is a legendary name, known by name but not yet glimpsed, will want to see how the reality measures up to the legend.

The pity is that Google will not be appearing in a classical role. It is a regret she herself must secretly be sharing, that it takes her less than half an hour to get that day early in 1951 when I first interviewed her.

"In a way it was the theatre in Australia as a challenge", she told me. "I've as much to appear continuously in one light comedy after another. I'd like to play Hedda Gabler, portray some Shavian women, do Shakespeare and Chekhov — plays that virtually are unknown to the general Australian public."

We were in her dressing room at the Comedy, where she was resting after a matinee of Clifford Odets' *Went the Day Well*. She had been much acclaimed for playing the role in London with Michael Redgrave and Sam Wanamaker and was reviewing her performance for Australia. Brian James and the late Clement McCullum were her leading men, Noel Farrow and Barry Croxall were also in the cast.

At the same time Google was an rehearsal for Constance in Maugham's *The Constant Wife*. Originally performed in the 1920s, it was being back-dated to the Edwardian era to allow her to look stunning in some beautiful period costumes at the same time making the dialogue seem almost Withers.

A little over two years before her husband, John McCullum, had been appointed assistant managing director to J.C. Williamson Theatres Limited, at that time the greatest theatrical empire in the Southern Hemisphere. There seemed little doubt that ultimately he would become the biggest figure in commercial theatre — and in those days commercial theatre meant professional theatre as opposed to amateur. Except for the UTRC (now NTCA), there was nothing half way.

To some it looked as if Google was making a big sacrifice in transferring her career to the other side of the world. Only

months before embarking for Australia she had made her classical debut by playing a well-received Gertrude and Desdemona opposite Redgrave's Hamlet and Benedick at Stratford upon Avon. Had she remained in England at that period, who knows what heights she would have attained, perhaps been made a Dame. Instead she elected to accompany McCullum to Australia.

One of the top women stars of British films throughout the forties and early fifties Google, who had acted many stage roles in the thirties, transferred her colossal star quality to the stage with greater ease and success than did several of her contemporaries.

In 1943 she had played opposite John Clements in Pinchley's play of ideas *They Came to a City*; in 1945, taken over from Ray Hammond in *Power Lines* and in 1948 briefly shared with Irene Worth in a short-lived Ronald Millar play, *Chances for Delish*.

Her powerful portrayal of the long-suffering wife of an alcoholic in *Went the Day Well* made audiences and critics alike regard her with a new respect, which grew when she replaced Peggy Ashcroft in Redgrave's *The Deep Blue Sea*. Then followed the unbelieved was convicted of manslaughter in Millar's rather replaceable *Waiting for Gullian*, with husband John McCullum and Frank Lawton.

Google's first introduction to Australia and New Zealand came in 1935-36 when the McCullums toured in *The Deep Blue Sea* and the Alan Melville comedy *Seven and Laura*. They endeared themselves to Australian audiences and the warmth of their reception probably influenced the decision to permanently settle and work in the country in 1936.

Before that, apart from the Stratford season, Google appeared with McCullum in London in 1937 in *Jenny*, an American comedy Union Matthews was performing in it. Australian, which, courtesy of the people's talents, did not last long.

Soon after arrival in Australia they played together in Lesley Storne's light-weight comedy *Went the Day Well* in which McCullum had appeared for nearly a year in London and now devoted for Australia. It attracted capacity audiences.

During that 1941 interview Google talked accurately of her desire to excel in generating better theatre in Australia. She was aware it would be an uphill struggle. There was no natural company and JCW seemed no substitute to offer any losses it might incur in staging the classics, which happened with commercial management in London. JCW did in fact establish its own touring Shakespeare company, inaugurated by McCullum, but apparently public response did not warrant its continuation.

With the Odets and Maugham plays, both directed by John Sommer, audiences saw a very dramatic Withers as well as an



Google Withers and John McCullum in *The Deep Blue Sea* (1935)



Google Withers in *The Constant Wife* (1951)



Google Withers and John McCullum in *Went the Day Well* (1935)



Google Withers and John McCullum in *Went the Day Well* (1935)

Withers

support performer of light comedy, two very different but equally polished and stylish performers.

Then came a break when George made her Broadway debut in Graham Green's *The Complaisant Lover*, with Redgrave and Richard Johnson.

Back in Australia George's next portrayal, towards the end of 1962, was of a sloppy, good-natured, easy-going, middle-aged housewife in Ted White's *Woman in a Dressing Gown*. Originally a TV play, then film, White had revealed it for the stage and, after its world premiere in Melbourne, the intention was for George to do it in London. It was a clever performance, the gem, concerning the treachery of plot and lines, infusing humor into the part and even achieving moments of pathos. An actress loved her in the mediocre play and it enjoyed a successful tour.

Instead of repeating *Woman in a Dressing Gown* in London, however, George played Queen Marguerite in *Henry's Kiss the King* opposite Alec Guinness at the 1963 Edinburgh Festival, transferring to London's Royal Court. Soon after her return to Australia, she told me it was her intention to appear on a play in New York or London every two years.

With McCallum now joint managing director of ICW's, one assumed she would have the pick of women's roles in contemporary plays. Frequently possible parts landed on the horizon, only to be turned down for various reasons. There were reasons she would play Martha in *Albert's Wife's Affair of Virginia Woolf*, but it was not the sort of play ICW's cared to present, and might not be good for George's image. Another possible was *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*; the *American* play about Dylan Thomas, George would only do it if Guinness could be persuaded to come to Australia and repeat his Tony Award-winning performance. There was even talk of her appearing in *Moby Dick*, and then in *Mao*.

To coincide with the 400th birthday celebrations of William Shakespeare in 1964, George appeared with Keith Michell in *The First 400 Years*, a Shakespearean programme arranged by English drama critic Alan Dini, with a cast of ten. It consisted of scenes from the Bard's plays.

Since George's Shakespearean inclinations had only been 30 years before, it was brave of her to play opposite the thoughtfully experienced Michell. In my opinion she was most stylish as Portia in the *Banquo*-*Macbeth* scene and as Beatrice. Her shrewish Kate possessed a different brand of humor with which she capably coped. On the first night I felt there was too much tenderness creeping into the roles of her Queen Margaret in the third part of *Henry VI*; there should have been more venom and bitterness. And the choice from *As You Like It* was not perhaps the best for George who, as a Robin Hood outfit,

looked rather like a hearty English pantomime principal boy about to burst into song! Her *Gertrude*, in the *ghost* scene, seemed merely a springboard for Michell's Hamlet.

The programme was presented in three parts, the first segment consisting of a fairly minute period screen of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Michell of course had played *Antony* before, but George seemed to me more than able to match him with her performance.

Personally I found *The First 400 Years* a most satisfying experience, but audiences unfortunately seem not drawn to it. It might have been preferable to have presented a full-scale production of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The following year she played in Samuel Taylor's comedy *Scandinave Place*, which personally I liked, geared as it was to mature type audiences. George, as Lady Piper, walked through the play with her usual aplomb, head and shoulders above the rest of the cast.

In March 1966 she was seen in her last and only Australian play, *Destiny of the Moon* by James Deane. Highly melodramatic, and set on the homestead of a NSW sheep farm, it had George, in the weekly property owner, having twenty-one years before married a farm hand (Ed Deemond) to get a chance to see the baby she was pregnant with by someone else. A 'Virginia Woolf' relationship had sprung up between the couple mid, when her former lover — an alcoholic — appeared on the scene, she sent him to his death, afterwards leaving quite unsteady.

Opening cold, the play required considerably more work done on it and needed all of George's skill to make it seem plausible, even then it sometimes was greeted with laughter in the wrong places. A big flop at the box office, where afterwards concluded that George and the play were the cause of the disagreements between McCallum (by then sole managing director) and the ICW board, which led to his eventual resignation.

A 1967 all-star West End production of Shaw's *Gentle Love* saw George playing Mrs George along with such luminaries as Moss Hazzan, Ian Carmichael, Margaret Rawlings and Alec Guinness.

Back in Australia the following year (playing for a management other than ICW's, Philip Productions), she and McCallum appeared in the last *Apokalyptic* play seen here, *Relatively Speaking*, with Peter Adams and Kenneth Wallace. It possessed some first class acting.

Talking to McCallum in Sydney after the opening night, he informed me of his plans, an association with London producer Peter Budge (who had produced *Giving Marvin*), to assemble a company with himself, George and Australian actors from England and Australia, and mount a



George and her husband, Alan Dini, 1964



George and her husband, Alan Dini, 1964



George and her husband, Alan Dini, 1964



George and her husband, Alan Dini, 1964

production of Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*. It would tour Canada, then Australia, followed, he hoped, by formation of a national company with government subsidies. The scheme never materialised.

Towards the end of 1969, Google had one of her biggest Australian stage successes for several years. Neil Simon's *Plaza Suite* in different sets she played a middle-aged woman trying to hold together her marriage, a lightly young blonde willingly being seduced by a former boy friend, and finally the mother of a reluctant bride. Never before had she displayed such versatility in one evening and it was all great fun. Her leading man, brought from America, was Alfred Sander (now in TV's *The Young Doctors*).

Google's side Australian film, *McCall Queen* (and her first movie for sixteen years), came in 1971. It did not call for her to exert much acting powers, but merely displayed an extension of her off-screen self. She was photographed looking most attractive in a succession of glamorous outfits. The picture, directed by McCaffery, with Ed Deemsman, Alfred Sander, John Laws, Ross Thompson, Tom Oliver and daughter Joanna as the cast, was a disappointment.

Google's last Australian performance, in 1972, was with the Melbourne Theatre Company. Madame Marigny in *The Cherry Orchard* and Mrs Chevalley in *An Ideal Husband*. Both productions were highly praised by most critics, but I was disappointed.

On the first night direction of the Chekov play seemed to me most negative and, instead of ensemble playing, appeared geared to Google as its star later. In the TV version, she and the production seemed a great deal better.

The Wilde play disappointed even more. Google (on opening night at least), seemed to have been misdirected and to have given awareness when delivering an epigram, make free. Despite further attempts to make her the Big Star, she was greatly overshadowed by other members of the company. I rate Mrs Chevalley right at the very bottom of all the performances I have seen her give.

Regrettably I did not see her Lady Kitty in *Murphy's The Circle*, which she played first at the Chichester Festival in 1966, then for a year at London's Haymarket. From all that I have read and heard, it must really have been something.

Now we shall see Google, McCaffery and Frank Thring playing the roles in *The Angfisher* originally created by Colin Johnson. Ralph Richardson and Alan Webb. The play is by William Douglas Home whose many credits include *The Chiltern House*, *The Master of Norwood*, *The Architect's Dilemma*, *The Secretary's Man*, *The Jockey Club Station*, *Lord George Rake*, *My Father and The Dame of Ruth*.

And after this Australian season — what then for Google? It seems probable she will be in the next Chichester Festival season, perhaps as Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.



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TCT

How many theatres can claim to have staged a play down a main with the mums' head lamps pointed on to provide the spotlight?

In 1962, to the advantage of American oil corporations, the Murrumbidgee Government closed down the shale mine oil industry at Glen Davis in NSW. The miners revolted with a stay-in strike that had been in progress for two weeks when the Miners Federation invited Sydney New Theatre to perform their current play *The Candy Store* below ground.

The experience at Glen Davis was one of the highlights of the theatre's first years at the Castlereagh Street address. The major event however was the first season, commencing in 1952 at *Ready River*. Derek Donnelly's Australian folk musical play that had had its world premiere at Melbourne New Theatre not long before.

Its plot revolving around a shepherd's strike of the 1890s, *Ready River* introduced to Australian audiences a number of traditional folk songs and some new ones in the folk tradition with music and lyrics by several contemporary composers and writers — for example the theme music for the *Ready River*, sung by Gloria Karpman to words by Henry Lawson and 'The Ballad of 1891' with words by Helen Pollock and music by Doreen Jacobs.

There is little doubt that *Ready River* featuring the Bushbuckers Band and popularising songs like 'Clack Go The Shears', 'My Old Black Billy', 'Cammerilla Shore', 'Widdagunga Joe' and many more gave the then infant Australian folk song revival its most important impetus. An LP record of songs from the show sung by members of the Sydney production was issued by Daphne and soon became a hit when played over a number of radio stations.

New Theatre groups in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and later Newcastle all mounted their own *Ready River* productions which like Sydney and Melbourne, they performed not only in their central venues but in numerous city, suburban and country halls. It is estimated that some 450-600 people saw these New Theatre performances of *Ready River* and that 250,000 of these saw Sydney New Theatre productions. Publication of the play by Heinemann's has introduced it

NEW THEATRE MOVEMENT

PART 2 COLD WAR AND AFTER

Mona Brand completes
her history of the
New Theatre Movement

into schools where it is often put on by pupils.

When the Murrumbidgee Club purchased the building, Sydney New Theatre was compelled to leave 147 Castlereagh Street and *Ready River* completed its successful season at the Waterside Workers Federation hall in Sussex Street, where for the next nine years thirty-three New Theatre productions were staged "under the auspices of the Waterside Workers Federation".

The Sydney Morning Herald's failure to review New Theatre productions after their critic's praise in 1948 of *The Sea, The Sea* and by Sean O'Casey was soon followed by their refusal for a number of years to accept a paid advertisement. Today's New Theatre Secretary, Morris Hampson recalls that a cheque sent as usual with the advertisement two weeks in advance, was returned. When the theatre queried this and made efforts from time to time to submit an ad across the counter, the explanation given was "lack of space". It was only after a personal discussion took place in the early 1960s between a Herald top executive and the late Ian Hardy, Secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation that advertisements and reviews of New Theatre shows returned to

the columns of that paper. (The story goes that Ian Hardy mentioned the fact that wharries load and unload newspapers.)

Advertisements did appear in the less influential classified section of the *Daily Telegraph* but the security of reviews of New Theatre productions in the Sydney dailies between 1948 and 1962 ensured the names of this group from general public notice. Only *Trilby* came into notice papers, an occasional one-liner on the radio — plus all important "word of mouth" — informed theatre goers during their twelve years that twenty-five new Australian works were presented as well as plays of world renown like *Les Mis de Doreen*, *The Affirmative Area* and the *Pierrot*. An *Inspector Calls*, *Equus*, An *Inspector General*, *The Good Soldier Schweik*, *Arms and the Man*, *The Grassie*, *The Beggar Thief* in *Town*, *McMasters*, *The Quare Fellow*, and many others. And in these days few of these plays could be seen elsewhere in Sydney.

These publicity difficulties were symptomatic of the 1960s. In America McCarthyism reached its peak with the execution in 1953 of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg on charges of espionage still considered by many to have been fabricated. The theatre and film world had suffered the galling of the "Hollywood Ten". Comparatively minor interventions in Australia included the 1954 Pease Commission, designed, in the opinion of many, to discredit the Labor Party and all left wing societies. New Theatre supported Establishment defiance, but some of it was surprising — for example the last season cancellation in Sydney in 1954 of a western suburbs town hall that had been hired for a performance of *Ready River*. In the same year an attempt was made to prevent the showing of *Blues A Million* (a play about juvenile delinquency) in a church hall in North Sydney.

But 1962 saw a definite upswing in New Theatre's fortunes. That year John Hume's production of *The Long and the Short and the Tall* by Wilfrid Hall won first prize in the NSW Arts Council Drama Festival. The Herald reported this triumph the following year with their entry of *Our Dear Relations* as usual on the commercialism of Mother's Day with a cast including Morris Harris, Mark

Ready River (1952) Camp fire scene: Brian Loughlin, Chris Dempster, Edmund Wilson, Laurel Parker and Ian Moore



Edwards, Jean Blue and Vincent Gil, directed by Nan Gore and Norma Disher and with a set designed by Robert Brunning.

A performance of *Ready River* in the Ring at Newcastle by local players in 1957, led to the formation that year of Newcastle New Theatre. During its twenty-one years this branch has staged some forty-five major productions and holds regular workshops, play readings, poetry readings and film nights. Between 1962 and 1972 their home was "The Dungeon" — once a beer cellar in the basement of the Trades Hall Performing sometimes there and sometimes at the University, and in recent years at the TPI Association's Scott Street rooms where they are tenants; their productions have mainly been the same as those performed by other New Theatres. Their most recent production is the world premiere of the rock opera, *Encounter* and *Wu Chay* by one of their own members, Gary Roberts.

An organisation known as New Theatre Australia was formed in the early 1950s to link all the State branches in a national body that held constant news every Easter to establish policy, exchange experience and plans, organise participation in the annual national peace movement and to plan New Theatre national drama schools.

Three ten-day schools were held each Christmas for ten years and related between the branches. Among leading theatre personalities invited to address the schools were Robin Leggett, Ron Haddock, John Bell, Zoe Caldwell and Brian Syron. At New Theatres in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth debarked leaving only Sydney Melbourne and Newcastle, the need for a national body became less important and it ceased to function; but mutual contact still between the remaining groups on issues in the form of play exchange, visits to each other's productions and the provision of acting classes.

In 1963 the Sydney Theatre moved to St Peter's Lane and Kings Cross where members and friends had converted a former outdoor car park to an outdoor theatre. The ten years spent there were marked by many successes and some good press coverage of *The Wind*, *The World of Sholem Alchemy*, *Andrew's Mother Courage* and many other productions including the six months season in 1967 of *On Stage Vietnam*. That ensemble effort by writers, directors, choreographers and actors was almost certainly the best of the Australian contemporary movement. *On Stage Vietnam* in 1967, and *Going, Going, Gone* in 1968, used music, drama, narrative and soundtrack treatment of politicians to introduce a new type of format that was soon to be seen at the State Street, the Mural and the APG.

But the St Peter's Lane event causing the biggest public sensation was John Tucker's production in 1968 of Jean Claude Van Itallie's three-part play *American Warsaw* the third segment of which was banned on moral grounds by the NSW Chief Secretary. While the season continued with the banned segment replaced by a satire on the situation a broad committee called "Friends of American Warsaw" prepared plans for a

one-night performance of the unaltered version. This played to a packed house in the Teachers Federation auditorium while thousands of people thronged Sussex Street outside hoping to learn to get in.

Audience excitement ran high at the end of the third segment when the police attempted to arrest the two heavily disguised "doctors" in the cast as they made a dash for an audience door. They appeared to vanish but proceeded by other cast members they shed their costumes and actually returned to mingle with other cast members who were trying to stop the police from moving down the set to take it away as evidence. There were no prosecutions, and some time later the confiscated pieces of the set were returned.

Freeing more space for major productions, workshops, acting classes, children's theatre and street theatre rehearsal, Sydney New Theatre moved in 1973 to the present address in King Street Newtown where, for the first time, it owns its own building — a former factory that members, unions and friends transformed into a modern "little theatre" possessing one of Sydney's biggest stages. Two years later the Australia Council made a grant of \$57,000 to help pay off the premises.

Among the best-offer successes at Newtown have been the smash hit *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* directed by Stanley Walsh, John Tucker's production of *The Changing Room*, and John Armstrong's 1978 production of *Friday the Thirteenth* a play about Jack Lang, by Australian writer Kevin Morgan. During this same period Income Levy's sensitive and superbly directed *The Captains of Approach* reminded audiences that the New's tradition of presenting not only contemporary Australian British and American works but also older plays of European origin was still alive and well.

Over the years Melbourne New Theatre has staged many of the same plays as its Sydney counterpart, as well as some of its own locally written dramas and music. Functioning now at the Orpen Factory at Clifton Hill since moving from the Prun Factory premises, they originally found and shared with the APG Melbourne New Theatre says it is "concerned with presenting plays that not only appeal to but have direct bearing on the lives of everyday people." *The Melbourne Times* is the only paper consistently reviewing their shows now, most daily papers including *The Age* having stopped sending critics to

analyse theories.

Sydney New Theatre has experienced a similar hardship since *The Revolt* advised in 1976 that they would no longer by sending critics to the "little theatres" — a decision that dealt a blow not only to the little theatres concerned, but at the theatre scene generally when one recalls how many of today's professionals received their early exposure and press notices while appearing in amateur stages.

Formed in 1932 Sydney New Theatre is now Australia's oldest existing theatre, professional or amateur. Among the well known people associated with it at the beginning of their careers have been actors like Alan Herbert, Ken Womers, John Gray, Donoh Shearing, Jean Blue, Hazel Phillips, Mark Melbourne, Maria Harris, Maggie Kirkpatrick, Brent Collier, Rod Williams, Howard Vernon, Carole Skinner, Trish Miles, John Hargreaves, Vincent Gil and Lorna Lasker. Those who have both directed and acted include David Wells, Jeremy Levy, Edmund Allison, John Armstrong, Robert Brunning, Marie Armstrong and Nan Vision, while past directors and set designers who have helped to create standards for the New and consequently for the wider Australian theatre scene are Lloyd Lambie, John Tucker, Margaret Barr, Stanley Walsh, Brian Syron, William Chesbrough, Elmer Maxton, Cedric Flower, Rodrick Shaw and John Corvellec.

But despite present publicity problems Sydney New Theatre has just celebrated its determination "to continue its role as a socially relevant and committed theatre" — a policy that is harder to carry out today than in the past because of the difficulty of obtaining full Australian rights for the sort of plays that not many years ago only New Theatre would have performed. But although this provides new problems, it also brings new challenges, at the same time it is a source of satisfaction to New Theatre members that the pioneering role of their theatre has helped to open the way for a wider general acceptance of socially relevant drama.

*FOOTNOTE

All three parts of *American Warsaw* include the worst aspect of the American way of life in the third segment two big dolls arrest observation on the walls of a hotel room.

All photographs in this article have been supplied by the New Theatre, kindly loaned by Edmund Allison.



Here Under Heaven (1961) by Moss Brand directed by Robert Brunning. L. to R. Jennie Collier, Charles Robinson, Paty Robertson, Tillya Ross.



Good Soldier Schweik (1956) Les Hope as landlord, John Armstrong as Schweik (3).



Ron Clark as Stanley (left) and Lolita Mays (Kate Laurel) in the MTC's production of *Gone With Hardy*. Photo: David Parker

Definitely requires more re-writing

GONE WITH HARDY

BY AMYND SEANALLY

Gone With Hardy by David Allen. Melbourne Theatre Company. Russell Street Theatre. Melbourne. To: Special 1. Approx. 1910. Genre: Ray Lawler, Director. Bruce Wilson, Choreography. Barbara Mears, Music. At issue: David Allen's. See the following: Stan (Stanley) and Kate (Kate Laurel) Mays, Ron Clark. Younger Mays, the theatre. *Wentworth*.

According to a programme note for *Gone With Hardy* "although the initial idea for the play was generated by an actual relationship in the early life of Stan Laurel, David Allen has respectfully supplied all the details and that is not a biographical work".

It would be interesting to know what facts the author had to work upon originally, and perhaps indication of what research he made. Despite the programme note, it is likely to create false facts about Laurel, which ultimately may well believe to be true. It is almost like trading in on a person's name. If a play is

really good, then there is no reason why it should not rest on its own merits with a historical character.

Stanley Jefferson is presented as a north country comedian working as the same vaudeville bill as English comic Jack McTavish and Australian singer Kate Laurel. Kate and Stan become a double act with her writing the gags, deriving the act and developing, with the business for a last wife and he takes the name "Laurel" from her. She apparently has a husband back in Australia, which McTavish discovers and blackmails her into going him, leaving on threat of telling Stan.

Stan eventually ends up in Hollywood where the pot-smoking Kate gives a liability McTavish, now a Hollywood producer, persuades her to return to Australia to obtain a divorce, with Stan believing he will then marry her. In the meantime he teams up with Oliver Hardy. Soon after Kate's departure he marries the first of his five wives and she attempts a comeback in her native land, fully embracing Stan has gone with Hardy.

The piece is structured to afford opportunities for the three to perform variety numbers solo, in duos or trios. For the most part it holds together and, with

many more, could become quite a durable vehicle and achieve success wherever the good life comes's name is known. It most definitely requires more re-writing though. One suspects that since the play's director is playwright Ray Lawler he presumably will have knocked it into better shape than its original script.

The problem of opening a play 'cold' has not of course as well known as the fact Broadway has frequently had the advantage of a 'doctoring' try out (see I suggest the MTC could at least have 'back staged' this one, better still, it could have been given a Victorian country try-out).

While it is admitted dramatic license has been taken with Laurel's life, certain realism comes out in production which careful checking could have eliminated. There is really no reason and director Lawler must share the blame.

For instance, Ella Sherrie's "Barbarian Bertha" seems to have been confused with that of Verla Tilly. "The Road to Quagga" was certainly not around in 1910 and Kate is far more likely to have performed at the Tivoli in Melbourne rather than the Regal. In 1912 Charlie Chaplin would not be known for his bowler, hairy cut and barrel chest.



Mariette Ruge and Stravinskis in the Australian Stage Company's *The Emigrants*
 (Photo: David Parker)

Comes of Flanders. *The Emigrants* is chiefly remarkable for its literary boldness and sentimentality. Eventually it presents a series of naïve songs and letters, supported by sonnets, announce month, year, and narrative facts. This is a respectable form of theatre, but deep poising when the matter and its presentation borders on the earnest, the heroic and melodramatic.

The Emigrants with its songs, its poetry, with its explicit themes of apotheosis, salvation and exploitation, screams out for a freedom or tough, ironic, highly theatrical treatment, otherwise all the parts are those of an object. Vale of Tears. The theatre should theatrically, dramatically, even its tears, not merely present them as a flock of Chateaus. On the other hand, to quote Bill, a theatre that can't be laughed in is a theatre that should be laughed at.

The music, traditional Italian songs and dances, arranged by Dorothea Mallowan (Musical Director of the National Theatre, London) was enormously supportive and imaginatively naive — never commenting or making direct statements of its own. The

musicians, led by Michael Morley (who has written a book on Mozart), were cozy and convincingly lachrymose from time.

The actors were more themselves or more singers rather than actor-singers and creators of characters. So on a Brechtian or Grotowski sense they had nothing to break out of, comment on or transform into. With a paucity of character or stereotype, naturally the drama lacked focus and comprehensible development, not to mention theatricality. The most inventive part of the evening was the use of props, materials, and elements of costume to organically transferring expressive devices, a procedure that has been successfully exploited by some of the best new theatre over the last ten years.

The only recent event I can compare *The Emigrants* with, because of its central song structure, is the APC's *Back to Bourke St*. Though without the potentially subversive allusions of the Australian Stage Company show, *Back to Bourke St* was much superior in its wit, edge and effectiveness, its connecting colonialism and bourgeois theatricality.

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Inordinately, unreasonably funny

BEEDROOM FARCE

GREG CURRAN

Beedroom Farce Alan Ayckbourn: The Australian Playhouse Theatre, City of the Drama Theatre, Sydney 1999. Opening 1 October 1999. Director: Peter Whittington. Original Script: Victoria Whittington. Music: Stephen Platt. Design: Graham May. Props: Graham May. Lighting: R. Tedman. Costume: Walter Van Meerhaeghe.

Costs: Kate Beestrick, Ed: Ruth Greenwood, Ed: Barry Gwynne. Set: Barbara Gwynne, Michael Peter Gwynne, Kate Judith Gwynne. Props: Anne Whittington, Michael Peter Whittington. Photo: Peter Whittington.

Maestro Porteous was always an earnest sort of actor, even if it seemed, to impress himself upon a part, as the consciousness of an audience. In a review I wrote in 1971 about him as Thoreau, I noted that, "as the part incorporates much gawking and brightly eyed cheerfulness, it's small wonder he's something less than riveting".

In the British import Alan Ayckbourn's *Beedroom Farce*, Porteous has a chance to go the whole hog in this particular brand of acting. And by way of paradox, he's much less marvellous, far more pleasing. He plays Trevor, a slightly awkward mother's boy married to the gypsy-like Susanah, a divorced mom with wild hair and brightly painted arse who moves a secret lair (for all confidence of moments of extremely obvious Kate Fitzpatrick).

Trevor is pathetically anxious to please, not only his wife, but his former girlfriend (and) and the friends whose house-warming party he and Susanah have crashed with their domestic carry on. But he still manages to ruin everyone's evening. In an engaging monologue left by a departing guest, he looks engagingly goofy. Despite the fact that his very presence spoils trouble, that he's a walking disaster area, no one can resist him.

The mystery in the case for Trevor's is Delta (Ruth Greenwood). She's rich, thin, pregnant, middle class, cozy but sometimes unpredictable, a bit disconcerting in a nice way (she doesn't really approve of Susanah as a daughter-in-law but keeps that to herself) and husband Ernest (repeatedly proper about uncertainties (dancer martial or adjustments with your doctor she says, they take an interest in such things, indeed her own doctor takes a genuine interest) formidable inner rituals making up for an unimpressive former account for almost an entire scene).

The acquiescent Ernest is a comfortably successful man on the surface. Privately he's in rather others about anything out of the ordinary, high points in the rich tapestry of his existence include choking the sleep in the spare room and eating pickled art on toast in bed. No particular reason why the two should be such a



L to R: Ruth Greenwood, Kate Beestrick and Kate Fitzpatrick in a scene from *Beedroom Farce*. Photo: Victor Postmann

specifically obvious wreck, but this is a certain type of comedy, perhaps even a farce. Requests for vital info, dramatic coherence and so on will be treated as no much not packing, and therefore ignored.

The party wrecked by the unbuttoned couple has been gone by housewarming cake of wedding Miss Malcolm and Kate (Peter Rosley and Judith Whittington) Susanah has caught baby rather innocently leaving her (Kathleen Dunlop) and jumped to hysterical conclusions. Trevor goes to Jan's place to explain his innocence to her husband Nick (Barry Gwynne) who is well to do and trendy, and therefore more or less calm and cool about what may or may not have happened. Nick is more interested in his own problems, he has back trouble and is laid up.

Susanah goes over and jumps Ernest

and Delta up, and her and Nick are up. In fact everyone is up. On leaving Malcolm and Kate's, Trevor and he'd come back and spend the night. Although he's forbidden Trevor to darken the door, Malcolm bows to the inevitable and lifts in the small hours making a de-facto second chair of friends. Naturally Trevor comes back and works that. The play does end at some stage.

In the Theatre Royal version the mechanics of the piece (which is too said to survive a bare description) is not too obvious, the general performance is smooth, the timing spot on, and, more a deal of the dialogue is very good, much of the timing is very funny indeed.

Unfortunately it is not very meaningful. There is a lack of depth in the characterization. That matters less in some cases

dramatized by John Francis, as the slipping president Ted Parker, and Bob Barnes, as Doc Riley the pigsticker, epitomized Old Boy of the club. Mr Francis showed high technique in the gradual crumbling of the president, from a blustering interloper to a whispered and venomous retreat while Mr Barnes made of the aggressive Riley a thoroughly credible bullfinch, his high point the sequence where, strikingly, he takes a trip to pot.

Martin Sherman scored comicality charm as the committee member Gerry Cooper. His Mumpsey's star footlocker Hayward revealed a well sustained mixture of warped humor and boredom. Ken

Maffei was a controlled snick and life player, rising to anger without overbalancing into megalomania, and as the beleaguered coach Laurie Holden, Telly Proulx created a sympathetically captured portrait of a man torn between the real chaos of housing and expediency.

Deciding that a late night presentation using an all-male cast would perfectly counterbalance the utterly masculine Williamson play, Terry O'Connell, Ken Molloy and members of the Trucking Company put their heads together to devise a suitable piece.

From three protaog languages emerged *Sister* a moving account of Australian

World War 2 women living and dying in the Pacific. Freely alternating ballad song and prose, and using very simple stage effects, the five players and music properly evoked such factual incidents as the voyage of the "Yvonne Brooks", the weary totem of wartime nursing in Singapore, and the massacre of Bataan Bay.

Sister secured performers of substance and dignity in Kim Hardwick, Kim Miller, Barbara Kander, Jennifer Leslie and Joy Polver, with Tim Welsh as pianist in Kim Maffei's haunting music for which Terry O'Connell and Myles O'Meara provided the lyrics.

One hell of a jump in moralities

ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE. AN EVENING WITH ADOLPH HITLER

TIMOTHY BARTLAN

Entertaining Mr Sloane (by Dennis Q. Driscoll, Toronto 1978, Director: Michael Sloane, Designer: Richard Hargrave, Light Design: Michael Sloane, Stage Manager: Trevor Macdonald, Actors: Anne Geline, Dennis Q. Driscoll, Larry Arthur Hays, Ed Petersen, Boris, Christopher).

An Evening With Adolf Hitler by Jonathan Caplan and Michael H. Harkness, Toronto Company Theatre, Toronto 1978, Director: Michael Sloane, Stage Manager: Trevor Macdonald, Light Design: Peter Harkness, Production: Beverly Macdonald, Actor: Dennis Q. Driscoll, (Performance).

Joe Orton had a mind quick to much mischief and not a little sarcasm, and a language at once lewd and sharply articulate. That much was more than evident when his first major success *Entertaining Mr Sloane* opened at the New Arts Theatre, London, in May 1964. The then old affiliates with Wilde and Pinter, together with an almost riotous attack on island grandeur, was carefully noted. But Orton's obvious "morality" troubled gent and audience, sophisticated alike, not that the two are poles apart. Sloane, after all, commits two murders and receives no acknowledgment. Sloane was disconcerting but very, very successful, in short, it worked, though only superficially to Orton's thinking, a matter it will return to shortly.

But those after all were the classical "barren" when the word "modern" took on deeper if more specious meaning and ethical considerations than any decade since the Twenties. If audiences can now comfortably engage Pinter with a steady made catch of critical plumes (consistency of overview), "play of necessity" of it all also follows that Orton is "irresponsible" yet, he draws a solid connection of things thoroughly modern. Break that ready Pinter is not "comfortable" and Orton certainly not "respectable" — though both can be played that way. Orton is an original voice of his decade an oblique reflection of a society in deep conflict. Not that Sloane has gained with the passing of fourteen years, its cut and thrust of

language and perception remain richly alive. And even if Joe still, his grotesque death remains an unerring curtain.

The Q Theatre's Sloane captures much of Orton but that is as no other stage production. It comes out really in *Entertaining Mr Sloane* I set. The set is very imaginative as a difficult enough staging area. Its pink, white wallpaper with protruding rose motifs, pink lounge chairs and rug, brown tone doors are really Kath, or one very obvious aspect of her clothing, twirly tickles her like a large box of chocolates that one unthinkingly consumes on a evening. The stage perimeter is a collapsed champagne of bricks, paper, rubble, rubber thong — about eight inches high and one is isolated not to notice it. Orton, to be sure, wanted the physical setting of Kath's homey home in the middle of a rubbish dump to take on deeper social overtones. For example, Kath's bathroom scene of garbage for baby talk and her ball-room language had a multitude of use. And, make no mistake about it, Orton was interested in the man of the misdeeds not just the appearance. The Q Theatre's production does not venture too far into the junk yard.

But Peter de Siles' Ed was great. Orton himself saw Ed as "the actual pivot of the play" and it's not difficult to see why. Ed's passing to life is his serious sense of "principles", his respectability (the possession of two bank accounts), his aspirations to middle class respect — which hardly had a moral grade, a weakness given to any dignity, quality and manipulation. As one English critic put it Ed appears to every good boy cause Ed is one of a type that would have been deeply offensive to Orton's voracious appetite for life. Orton the unashamed homosexual who loved the sexual, the intellect and Kenneth Harkness, de Siles' charm making, leather gloves, unsmiling, if bowing, brittle faced Edde was perfect. He conveyed why Ed always liked Sloane "boy" (the counterpart to Kath's Sloane "boy") — the moral repugnance of ugliness, "amused" at Sloane's morality while stalking him for his sexual process. de Siles managed that difficult Pinter-like moment when Ed tells to Kemp's first to beg forgiveness after all these years, receives instant pain ("Words! A string of words. We're together again!") and shortly afterwards forgets and forgets Sloane's murder of Kemp. de Siles used Orton's initial language well to cut back at Ed revealing the character's

essence and yet make off at this wildly amusing as Orton would have wanted it. This I thought was especially highlighted by Ed's first entrance when a long, weary silence came over the audience as the dialogue shifts from the lumbering before several of Kath and Sloane to the blandly remaining homosexual overtones of Edde.

Arthur Geline, Kemp was well portrayed. But the production as a whole did not build that necessary and inevitable mounting tension that surrounds Kemp's relationship to Sloane. Jane Collet was a very creditable Kath's pathetic wit or without false teeth, led by her enormous sexual needs but trapped within the four walls of rose pink gentility. Collet's weary breakdown was moving and unusually funny — just the right blend for Kath. But there was too much momentum earlier in the play to make the explosive Kath of Act Three entirely acceptable.

And thus is what Orton was on about. In the run for Sloane's body Kath and Ed throw aside all moral postures. Not that Orton himself was a moralist but he was too sharp to allow any of his characters to disguise their underlying desires for long with any veneer of respectability. In Orton's world desires rule behaviour. Sloane himself a rather admired nor condemned, and Rick Harben in the part went a long way to capturing that though lacking plenty in Act One. Orton thought Sloane worked only superficially, that it had got into compartments and that people will put things into compartments. It's very hard in class, in sex, in sympathy. That of course puts a tall order on any production of Sloane. It should ideally, smelt an audience not just smelt them. The fact that Orton missed compartments and made that WILLYD! amusing is hardly as Ed would have it "an average man to not all tastes".

It is one hell of a jump from Joe Orton's sense of morality to Adolf Hitler. And what better way to gauge that gap than by spending an evening at home with the Hitler's, even if it happens to be their last night in the bunker of the Reich Chancellery.

The idea is good, a two-act, divided each half into long, sustained monologues. First Eve's, then Adolf's. Their last night before moving on from Germany finally crumbled about their heads. A night spent in carmine atmosphere of things past — Eon a something of emotion recorded on tranquility, Adolf's a little more whimsically. The idea leads still to a

Shakespeare as Richard makes the important Henry stand for it, undisciplined himself on his last moments of royal power and as the same time weighs with great dignity the cause and responsibilities transferring from one king to another. The great mistake thereby (With more own tears I wash away my sins. With mine own hands I give away my crown . . . I bury in one tomb as a piece of self-indulgent pessimism that of it also a history of undoing that transmarginalism represented by the conclusion. The Richard as Macbeth-like showed us in this scene was cold and selfishly self-indulgent. Cressell's Henry treated him with impatience and contempt, as did the rest of the court, chiding with irritated boredom, searching hopelessly for a mirror at Richard found one even as another to close and the moment of surrender. The performance was also inside in its way, but it demystified both Richard and Henry. It showed them not as officers of a divinity created world order but individuals fighting

ing for their place in the sun.

But there was a deeper problem in the performance than the interpretation I have described, and that is the verse. Much of the dignity of the royal characters lies in the rhythms of the verse, and it seemed to me that almost at no time during the performance were the rhythms given the weight due to them, nor the verse brought alive as drama.

There were moments notably from Henry VIII as the Duchess of Gloucester, Edward Mordaunt as the Gardener and Lenka Wright as Northumberland, and the moment at Act V when the deposed Richard on his way to Forest Castle says a poetic farewell to his Queen (Clash Taylor). But on the whole I found it the kind of old-fashioned Shakespeare production in which the actor attempts to be "real" despite the verse, and in which the worst characters, lavishly dressed, stand around in a semi-circle taking a public but passive interest in the proceedings when

not required to speak.

The set, by Sue Randall, basically a circular turntable putting out into the audience, also by its very nature created unnecessary obstacles to the hierarchical nature of the play. The very structure of the play is a version of one man's rise and another's fall. The verse is full of rising and falling imagery, and when the King says at the start in Act I: "We will depose and hold him in our arms", or in Act III, "Down, down I come, like glistering Phaeton, Wasting the manage of windy powers", that it can only seem pompously since he has nowhere to go.

Overall, I found it a disappointing production. The politics confusing, the action slow and the speech unconvincing to the ear. I felt very little sense of ensemble, and one has the right to expect this from a State company, or at a profit of new projected by the cost. An empty and insubstantial royal stream of kings compared not of the fact.

Glorified project-lecture

KEEP ON TRUCKIN' FRANCESCA

CLIFF GILLAM

Keep On Truckin' Francesca produced by Christine Randall, from Chicago. New Theatre, 1010 16th St. Washington, D.C.

Of all the "revolutionary" cultural movements which characterized that mad, mad modern decade "the Sixties", it has been the rise in feminist consciousness which most female pundits of the seventies have listed as the most important, both in terms of its larger implications and its subtle continuing impact on all our lives. The revolution has moved more slowly than some radical feminists would wish, all too rapidly for some dyed-in-the wool chauvinists but it has kept moving, inexorably. A mistake however of the chance it still has to go might be the fact that there has been as yet no noticeable change in the ratio of female to male dramatists. *Keep on Truckin', Francesca* does not itself contribute to any reform of the imbalance, since it is not strictly speaking a drama, and has not been so much written, as stitched together.

The show is basically a kind of short-drama — two performers give recitations from a range of learned writing, (usually poetry) and the recitations are linked together through the use of taped material and slide projections, as well as by passages of dialogue which sketch a relationship between a young radical feminist and an older woman whose life has been changed by the movement, but who is well aware of some of its shortcomings. The assembly of this material was undertaken by the director, Christine Randall, and the show is largely, as all female effort with Pat Shakespeare and Denise Kirby performing and stage management and design by Lee

Donelson.

Ms Randall has gone in a concrete overview of the various facets of the women's movement, including material drawn from the pragmatic social-welfare oriented libbers and also from such extremist wings as Valerie Solanas' SCUM — The Society for Cutting Up Men. This sensible balance and generally non-hysterical review of the problems women face in a sexist society and the various ways which the movement has devised to cope with them encourage me somewhat in regarding my dissatisfaction with the show, since an adverse criticism is unlikely to drive, from one so obviously sensitive to the shortcomings of the rhetoric of radical feminism, a simplistic accusation of male chauvinist prejudice.

I found the show, then, fairly dull largely because it seemed to state, non-dramatic. Various of the individual pieces were sensitive and powerfully delivered, and Ms Kirby particularly handled a marvellously lyrical, gently ironic and most moving passage on some of the deeper implications of subordination and female identity a passage taken from The Three Marries, *New Portuguese* device, with telling viscosity. But on the whole, the range of feminist perspectives covered is by now familiar to most of us, even too familiar, given the effects of media overkill and not even the inclusion of a wry satiric sequence from the pacific *Dear Woman* — on *Female Annual Seminars* could sufficiently lighten the often-serious tone of moral improvement which otherwise characterized the show. I thought that the original linking material, the dialogue between Experience and Youth old and young Sisters contained the makings of a rather more dramatic treatment of feminism than the pagant-like passages offered, and it's a pity more work wasn't done in developing that. Had it been developed there would, to my mind, have been more justification in viewing *Keep on Truckin' Francesca* over a four week season in The Greenroom. I simply do not see the point of tying up a theatre space well suited to the living out of

experimental and new drama with a kind of glorified project-lecture such as this (complete with sound-maid aids) no matter how solving it might be to the collective conscience. (It was after all no more than a play, since the show did not attempt to galvanize its audience into action in the way its vaguely Marxist form at first suggested it might.)

As I have said, I'd have to call *Keep on Truckin' Francesca* a failure. But as a concrete overview of feminism in the 60's and 70's and as an exercise in consciousness-raising I can see a lot of points in such a show being turned to schools. I'm surprised that the Theatre in Education wing of the National Theatre does not seem to have any involvement in the show, and I would hope that they see the chance to utilize the energy and good sense which has been put into it by performers and directors alike as the area for which finally the kind of show it is makes it best suited. And after all the optimism, point at which to strike a really powerful blow for the revision of sexist attitudes in our society must surely be in the immediately post-professional male and female consciousness.

Art which concealed the artifice

BETWEEN THE LINES

CURTIS BURNIN

Between the Lines by Marjorie Thompson. 1010 16th St. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036. N.Y. Rep. Also under Way in New York and 25 other cities.

"The art of the theatre" intoned Marjorie Thompson-Barker "is the art of acting first, last and all the time". Her dictum seems to me fundamentally true, a recognition that at the moment of performance all other aspects of production such as lighting, design and even direction exist to maximize the possibilities of that actor in that particular role, consistent

with one of the many valid interpretations of the script. It is because Connolly-Barber's claim is true that your obvious side of the theatre locally finds himself primarily actor oriented. Certainly I would prefer to see a skilled actor at work on familiar material — say Rob Alexander as Jagger — than indifferent new work.



Which brings me to Alexander Hay, unquestionably one of the finest actors around. His playing of Henry Lawson in the Marcus Cooney production *Between the Lines* gave me one of the most pleasurable evenings I have spent in the theatre. It was a performance for the connoisseur of acting, crammed with all which constituted the artist. An Aunt Lu student of mine, one who I suspect but rarely visits me, remarked that it was the first time he'd seen an actor who didn't come across as an actor playing a part, but seemed to be the person he was playing. An astute, perceptive comment, and I think he would have been on a more accurate had he met Mr Hay in flesh — a well-tuned mind, so to speak — and been that made aware of just how much the actor's portrayal of Lawson was craft. Even the makeup was astonishingly like Lawson, as a quick check of a ten-dollar bill (if you had one) would confirm.

Alex Hay's playing conveyed with subtle conviction the fragility of an alcoholic near the end of his tether, every gesture and tone appearing completely natural. Mr Hay's voice has a richness of timbre and range reminiscent of Alec Guinness, but so skilfully are those qualities deployed that one never has the sense of artifice, of the haughty Voice, as change of rhythm, emphasis and mood command lead us from moment to moment. Truly a consummately and memorable performance.

Prize too for Marcus Cooney's script, which selects the main obvious Lawson, the sentimental and the digresser. The play is built on a novel and subtle idea: that of a reading of selections of his work by Lawson. Not by stage from straight reading — which would make the show a simple reconstruction of a reading, as in *Emily Williams' Diaries* — to reminiscence of both pleasant and painful past events, accompanied and fuelled by full-bodied of spirit. We are thus an audience on two levels. I found it a telling device, deftly handled by both playwright and actor. I believe that the play has been presented only once before, and for a short season. It deserves to be toured, not only here in the Western Third, but all over Australia.

Strachan — quality of all great clowns

THE SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS

MICHAEL MORLEY

The Servant of Two Masters by Carlo Goldoni, translated by Sam Minkin with Mark Knight. First Theatre Company of SA Performance, Adelaide SA, 26 April-27 November 1979. Director: Edna Fenech, Design: David Davis, Light: Edna Fenech, Costume: Edna Fenech, Music: Margaret Polley, Assistant: Barrie McIntosh, Stage Manager: Peter Kishan. Performers: Graham Greenleaf, David, Nicholas Applegate, George, Graham Gidley, John, Tony Patten, Robert Hughes Green, Joanne Paul Smith, Stephen, Mike Adams, Gerald, John Mackenzie, Frederick, Teira Broadbent, Patricia, Mark Knight, Michael Patten, Peter McIntosh, Wayne James.

Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters* makes use of that most popular of farce conventions: the double of spirit identity. In various guises the mad actions in *Troverio*, *Shakespeare*, *Pygmalion*, *Twelfth*, *Twelfth* and *Twelfth* in far example, *The Comedy of Errors*. Shakespeare makes things relatively easy for the actor by having two sets of identical twins. But Goldoni's *Troverio* finds himself getting more and more harassed as the two brothers he's hoped for turn out to require the energy and lighter touch of a servant major who also happens to be a hard-water, possum in pants when the occasion warrants it.

Troverio, the servant on the make who decides that two heads are definitely better than one, especially when they are

on the same body, is a marvellous part for the actor who can cope with the role's demands. And as Tony Strachan, making director Edna Fenech could hardly have found a more adept and unassuming performer. I doubt whether there are more than two or three actors in Australia who could have brought to the role the qualities Strachan displays with an almost disconcerting proficiency.

He can dance, tumble, swing, engage the audience in bawdy artifice and reveal to appear spontaneous, balance lines and footings with the same deftness, and at the same time act in the best part for the production in such a way that he is never upstaging the other performers. It is a performance of enormous panache, cockiness and occasional affliction, yet one that always reveals the depths of self-control and swing display. Strachan has the quality of all great clowns — he manages to be both self-contained and apparently delirious at once, and he has the very rare ability (spatially acquired from his own experience in street theatre and clown school of being able to focus and hold an audience's attention and interest. It is encouraging to see the State Theatre realising how such talents can be put to use. If there were one criterion to be made of his performance, it would be that vocally at this stage of his career, he lacks colour and variety. His delivery occasionally betrays a little monotony and force. But these are minor objections. I have seen few more confident performances in some time, and in terms of play-acting, and



Peasants in Sea in Theatre Co's Servant of Two Masters. Photo: David Wilson

command of expressive gesture and movement, he lost nothing in comparison with one of my personal favourites in clowning roles — Erik Strand's *Armenia Di* for the Berliner Ensemble.

It was clear from the production as a whole that much of the credit for its strengths should go to the director. In almost every respect this was the most disciplined ensemble playing I have seen from this company. Lines were given point, attention was paid to style, blocking was always illuminating or offsetting the text, and movements had a precision and fluency that they have seldom invariably lacked in past productions. There was a few performances from Helen Bowring as *Perdona* which avoided stock old man gestures and vocal mannerisms. The delivery of the lines and comic timing were expertly assured and pointed. Paul Martin also to Chris Maffany's splendid, left-right and bottom servant *Servant* as a individual more sensible observer of the follies of her betters she displayed a new line in common sense and cynical remarks. The director's treatment of the young lovers *Clara* and *Shilo* managed to steer a path between exaggerated send-up and authentic sentimentality. Michelle Stoymer and Tony Priden moved on occasion like the puppets the young lovers are — in comparison with the vagrant and vitality of other characters — but this convention was used to good effect. And the former's *Clara*, often behaving like a shrew accustomed to getting her own way,

was a welcome departure from the endless and skilled series of chess doll heroines and all too frequently pained off with a badly conceived "conceit" productions.

In the brother role of *Heinrich* and her brother, *Daughter* Gary was at her most convincing in the opening scenes. Thereafter she became a little too heavy, though her diction throughout was clear and modelled the sweeping sentences which have sometimes marred other performances. Healey Cullen's *Daughter* managed to be instead really dull — a pity, as the part has more scope than was realised in that performance. And Brian Jones' *Brigella* was at times a little pale, though his and the director's view of the role was natural and convincing. One of the finest moments in the entire production came when the sister *Clara* returns both his and *Brigella's* masks and shows the latter and the audience the glimpse of a world far removed from Golden's lively and colourful Venice. It was a sudden tableau of ruminant stillness, both stately and awfully human, in which the personal actor became part of a Paradoxical vision of the stage world relationship. If there were nothing else in the production, it would remain very strong for this image alone.

But there are other features of *Perdona's* treatment which distinguish that in the best designed and best produced I have seen at the Playhouse. The set is functional, effective, poetic and uncluttered; actors' parts are demanded

and become a low stage on small insides — the traditional area for commedia performers. Marked Polonsky's present a muted but not a lack of the play's action at the opening and later rapsheet at waters, servants or simply stagehands. Backdrops are clearly recognisable as such, doors are doors, the canal is a wide ribbon of blue material (there are could have been devoted to the manipulation of that). *Brigella* were captured are flown in and we are always aware that it is a performance we are watching.

I have seldom seen a more imaginatively produced, in particular, the tableaux at beginning and end were a visual delight in themselves. So too, the music was completely appropriate and not, as in the past, dropped in to prop up a production which otherwise displayed a paucity of imagination. Of course there are flaws, the tempo was broken and after the interval, and there is the slight suspicion that Tony Strachan's performance begins with such things that he has to work hard to find further momentum. The other performers are at times a little too obviously concerned with style, more in the vein of arch comedy of manner than the rather carlier, more marvellous style that Golden evokes in the text. But these are minor objections to a production which reflects well on all involved, and which shows that Adelaide can benefit considerably from the stimulus and imaginative discipline of a director like *Supper* *Perdona*.



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Meanwhile, in the frog and insect-buzzed caverns of the University of Queensland's intimate forum, Don Batchelor's *Designs* as *Colonias* clamored for Coenraats, because exemplify what can be done with amateur actors in putting the text into context as an integral event. In the sole light of flickering tapers, the ancient dancing wings play, with the conviction of a profession, with female black, masks, doubling, and a chorus which in tandem a Chorus and not an embarrassed pack of extras, playing a second scene, the lovely *Don* as *Colonias*, speaks against the competing cries of the resident waterbirds. I have been the other, subject of the area left to any specific colored lands of which a part has, coasted, with love and pride, its pains and hopes. The City *Don* must recognize the Waters offstage. The *Altruism*, of course substituted for a most-4-year *Don* out and both *The Manner* and *Designs* are in varying degrees subtly dependent on the case of *Coenraats* a special grant from the Department of Cultural Affairs made possible the engagement of a professional director? But our own sacred and ever-renewed all-year round as need we need we want need each group for the presentation of our own indigenous Holy Theater?

production which is not only one of the major theoretical events of this year, but also one that is according to Spence himself very close to the style in which he would like to see the screen worked.

The play concerns the power struggle between two men. The first is a Premier of Victoria hoping to make a nest fortune by putting his legislation which bans money in and out-worn votes by appearing to effect liberal reforms in political control and prison reform. A simple air emission device (amazingly effective) has been invented. The Government has the patent rights, and is trying to get prisoners in Victorian jails to build them at negligible cost to the public. On this pretext the Premier is legislating to make the device compulsory on all voters, etc.

The opponent in "King" Richard Brown, triple murderer and the leader of an unofficial Union of Prisoners. He begins by demanding award wages for the prisoners building the docks, but quickly becomes aware of further implications. The Prisoner hopes to proceed jail riots (most probably by arranging Brown's death in his cell) after the legislation is passed, and then "voluntarily" offer the contract out to private enterprise. Naturally the firm the Prisoner secretly controls will win the contract. Throughout the play the Prisoner tries to keep his plans secret, and Brown tries to collect the evidence he needs to expose the Prisoner, and not that evidence to the outside world.

This reads rather like (and could be successfully played as) an Australian version of *The New Assembly on China*—in other words, typically, inhumanely, but with a wink and a nod that there but for a little dramatic slippage and misinterpreted good will lie. There are plot twists and turns, false leads and revelations, and a narrowly averted ending, where one is left hopeful but not certain that *Beijing* has won.

It is in the question of style, however, that Lynch's producer has meant a different approach. The production has been heavily screwed down into naturalism. As one less-than-happy audience member said, it was like *Cheer Squad* with subtext.

I personally think that the crisis was right for the play, and it was critically right for the drama. In a week when our TV screens were full of war pigs representing unscrupulous dupes of the corruption and unethical dealings of our local politicians, it was greatly satisfying to indulge in the violence and contentious exposure of political corruption on a grand scale. Steve Spear's has become all too famous from the immense popularity of the factual components of Reports and Royal Commissions. findings into politics and the police in Australia. And (another fact) there are no missing links, no ambiguities. The article of faith for Steve Spear is that such things do happen, and driver and cast are to be commended for an unflinching loyalty to that, indeed.

Moviehouse over as Twelfth Night is proving quite popular. It's very well acted indeed, particularly by Kerry McGuire. It's directed in the never oversteering-the-sideline intelligence style by Bill Redmond, with a good Furniture show

room set by Mike Bridges. I hope all find regular employment in the theatre profession, they deserve it. I can't think of any other reason for mentioning play or production, and I'm sure no-one has worked on it for any other reason. That's the however should be used as a practical example of why Twelfth Night should continue to receive major public subsidy grants, the

Softness at the core
of this production

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

© 2004 Blackwell Publishing Ltd, *Journal of Internal Medicine* 255: 105–112

[illegible]

Half way through the first act of the QTC production of *The Cherry Orchard* Madame Kovinsky turns out of the window. "Oh my children, my innocent children!" she intones, pacing wearily across the wilderness of the QTC stage into a forest of black drapes. The absence of any sign of that spectacular crash of rubble, Russia, *tempe perita* what you will is a tangible manifestation of the softness at the core of this production, proof that the deeper, resonant layers of Chekhov's masterpiece are being carefully revealed.

Other inappropriate concrete elements prove equally remarkable. The set for the first and final acts, a room of cavernous proportions, has clearly never been a nursery and in the play's dying last moments, the shade of the aunt against the trees are reduced to a pale tapping barely audible beyond the third row.

Joe MacLachlan has his spine rightly taught to emphasize Chisholm's comic intentions, and underlines the complexity of that animosity in reducing the pain behind the farm, and the divergent aim behind the economy; then The Cherry Orchard is doomed simply to wilt and wither. The company is far from being an ensemble, something which shows us the flawed approach to potentially vibrant dialogue: the same of cross-paraphrase and non-sequiturs is never fully resolved.

But Simpson's dominating and ultimately sinister Charlotte and Gillian Hyde's self-mocking Danyasha provide perhaps the most compelling performances of the evening. As the proud secretary to Clowernhouse Miss Hyde has all the makings of a true contender.

The Cherry Orchard is arguably the greatest drama the 20th century has produced, but it has for its life. If it is not to be relegated to the ranks of unobtainable classics, it needs more consistent representation than this.

Spears' presence has meant a different approach

**KING RICHARD
DRY RUN**

REFERENCES

[illegible]

(A) *Red 10*, *John Wayne*, *Tenille*, *Night*, *Western*, *Adventure*
 (B) *Control*, *70*, *Interracial*, *PG-13*, *Chorus*, *Bill*, *Madness*
 (C) *Draper*, *Wine*, *Romance*, *I*, *young*, *Black*, *Requiem*, *Long*
 (D) *Manager*, *Wine*, *Adventure*



Steve Spenser's experiments in form have led him this time to the detective story genre, and his presence in Brisbane during the rehearsals for La Bonte's premier season of *King Richard* have established a

Strongest cast Fortune have fielded

LUNCHTIME SEASON

MARGUERITE WELLS

Fortune Theatre's regular lunchtime shows are about. *Children From Eden*
The Constantine by Philip Henslow (Director: Roger Wilson)
 Cast: John Gifford, Bill Gifford, Maggie Caddy (Oct. 16)
Myself and Others (11-12 September)
Notes and Debates in Early Renaissance Drama (Private)
Reverend (Nov. 1984) (Director: John Wilson)
Thomas White, 1 (Director: Bill Gifford) (Director: John Wilson)
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I do think it will be as nice, when the correct midway between the Canberra Theatre and the Playhouse is placed in, don't you? I mean the tickets in the box office will be so much better off out there. They won't have to sell tickets to the accompaniment of Fortune Theatre performing in their foyer any more, and they'll have a grandstand seat when the Governor-General arrives for the first night of all those ballets and operas and things that get to go on inside the theatre.

Of course, it might be better for Fortune Theatre too. They won't have to perform in the lane of the building change in the box office, and more there might not be so much chance of their disturbing the real business of the theatre — making money — they might even be allowed to move their stage away from the wall.

It's one of those funny it-is-what-it-is things. You know the sort — thirty feet wide and eight feet deep, directly tucked away in the corner with two floors of crying windows as a sort of mood environmentalist's parody of a cyclorama. Of course the windows are cunningly hidden with a black backdrop, but the glorious light of lanterns still makes its presence felt. And best of all, stage left is unconspicuously solid government built brick wall. Be with translucent black backdrop behind them, brick wall to the left of them and audience on level of them, clear enough to look, there is only one way for the hapless actors to get off stage — the way they came — stage right. One comes away suffering from a longing who is the suspension of disbelief. In the last season for instance, Ahmed, on his way home late at night, stopped for a chat with Nura, and when he decided that things had gone a bit too far, tried to maintain on his way home by going back the way he came — thus implying that he



Pat Hutchinson (Mrs Spew), Bill Gifford (Johnny Spew) and John Gifford (Mr Spew) in Fortune's *The Education of Henry Adams*

had just dropped in under the lamplight in order to get washed up, and he really must be going now. Only a niggling ache, but even the less, an ache which could easily be cured by moving the stage away from the wall. Undoubtedly there are reasons why that can't be done, reasons more probably connected with not looking glibly in their mouths, than with theatrical common sense.

Ralph Wilson, who directed Philip Henslow's *The Constantine*, the first play in the season, has a magical knack. It is either a magical knack of squeezing good performances out of his actors, or else a magical knack of choosing good actors. Either way, John Gifford and Maggie Caddy, as the necessary attendant and his wife unconsciously believed of an unconsciously laughed Gann (Pat Hutchinson), three hours before her glorious hundredth birthday, were the strongest and Fortune Theatre have decided in their short professional life. The play, which was well-received at the Playwrights' Conference this year, is situation comedy and

deliberately inconsequential, except perhaps to the recently bereaved. Anyone hoping to be bereaved shortly should find it just what the undertaker ordered. It is a funny play and, as any public servant can tell you, what one needs at lunchtime when a dispiriting morning of public servicing is to be cheered up, no matter how glumly shy. Plays that present the essential uncertainty are definitely not for the two post-lunchtime questions-and-answers, before-lunch crowd.

As Nathan, a frenzied old man, his necessary so far gone that only Tabitha's clanking into bed with him convinces him that she is his wife, John Thompson gave what must have been the performance of a career. He smiled, rather apologetic man of the world surely a not celebrating, but then directors will insist on casting actors in parts where they get to play no-one but themselves. A Tabitha's 'old soldier', living half in glacial combat, half gently but wildly lost in anxiety for confirmation of his own sensations, John Thompson was truly laughing.

Fortune Theatre stresses that the Foye is ideal, because they can use 'vegetarian' animal acts. Unfortunately, in *Mousetrap* and *Talkback* this meant a great deal of mime which demanded more technique than the cast had to give. Doors which are opened, but not closed, are, in the normal course of events, even as a 'representational' production, still open five minutes later. Simple mime takes only a little thought and concentration, and a little deftness in establishing an invisible arc, can save an 'infernal' production from becoming a ridiculous one.

In *Mousetrap* the only piece of action which was not just talk, took place behind flats,

invariably I suppose, since it consisted in the chopping off of Brian's highly intelligent real head, and the placing of it on Roz's highly physical body. Megan, discontent with one brainy scolding lover and one brainless muscular one, thus created a brainy muscular man with a brainless scolding and got loses both boys in the end. The whole thing is not much more than an amusing conceit, and, if you'll pardon the pun, a highly cerebral one at that.

Bill Gammie as an anything-but-skippy Spew made the sort of robust and ludicrous baby that any besotted mother would dose on opium all. The following white sheet

which represented the sea, in which the infant first drowns and his parents was not a good device; the whole play lent itself more to visual representation than *Mousetrap* had done, but once again that representation was more skilful than informal.

Undoubtedly, Fortune Theatre's last-of-its-kind seasons at the Theatre Foyer are a success, since people come to one play and come again. Undoubtedly also this is partly because people will go to see a play at a theatre even though it is not the theatre. There's nothing quite like being lost, even if it means paying the price of spending the whole season asking you just don't walk through that blasted brick wall.

In a word, trivial

FLEXITIME

BURGER FLIPPERS

Directed by Roger Hall, Fortune Theatre Unit in association with CTC 1. Playhouse (London, Sydney, Leeds, ACT). Opened 20 September 1973. Director: Roger Hall. Assistant: Will Thompson.

John Peter McEldown, Hugh Lee Wilson, Ian Bill Henderson, Neil Ian Gordon, Edward Michael Paul Thompson, Neil John Michael Thompson, Andy John Wright (Chesham).

New Zealand has produced a variety of rather fine playwrights. Max Richards and

Alma de Groen are probably the best. Robert Lord, who had a play workshopped at the first Playwrights Conference, and Jennifer Crompton are theoretically less unknown than Richards or de Groen. Roger Hall, to judge him by *Flexitime*, is the least interesting of all. He is a kind of minor Williams.

Because it, in a word, trivial. It is original! Incredibly, during the longest string of one hours I've seen. Adding to this is a startlingly mediocre production by John Tasker, in which he fails to emerge his cost for the best throwing and withering throughout.

The story recalls four days in the life of a Public Service officer. All of them are there: the young, early job, the veteran, the foreigner (here a Welshman), the neophyte who knows more about drink and sex by the end of the play; and the fat lady. She is the friend of a lot of jokes about her size.

To make a long story short, they are all revealed to have been together looking. The veteran's wife has left him. The foreigner's wife also leaves him, to go back home. The neophyte is frustrated by religious conviction. And the fat lady has a man at home. There is also the boss who comes in from time to time, giving the others a chance to trigger behind his back and abruptly shuffle papers.

All of Hall's characters agree to the stereotype. In that sense, it is precisely that kind of comforted satire which is perfectly palatable to the real people he is depicting, as this case public servants. They can laugh at themselves and feel utterly tolerant. This is the liberal's accommodation to satire: more a celebration than an examination.

Two of the actors displayed an ability to cope with the young. Jim Wright plays the technician who holds an occasion to prob chafe from under people, or to take action. Every time he entered, the play began to kick. He achieved it, as a character, in the same way the somewhat done at Williams's play.

Paul Cameron is the neophyte who somehow he managed to make a human being out of a cliché.

John Tasker chose a completely naturalistic mode for this play. It is what is usually done in Australia when the piece is seemingly realistic. After all, the logic goes, don't people in an office all most of the time? We want this to look real.

The problem here, though, is that there is little real about real people speaking to one another in one clear line after another. This kind of comely distils reality, and the direction had to equally distil gestures, movements, and tones. They sat there like a drawing room full of deadweights.

Roger Hall was originally an English man, and the programme explains that that is one reason why he can write "with such humour and compassion". In a sense New Zealand has suffered as we have. Certain polished modes of expression from England have become our paradigms of character. In the long run, this stifles natural expression more than it stimulates it.



Bernadette Vincent (left) and Paul Cameron (right) in CTC's *Flexitime*.

Maude: And, then, tomorrow night, when I come in another week, I'll be a week's credit! Funny that, isn't it? Well, anyway, it while you can! Because, remember, you'll be out there with you some of Australia, shaking the dust from their shoes, saying 'at last, living in the colonies. Where's her comes a white hang?' Don't! A lot of whippersnaps up the left door, fancy stuff and things, you know, and, yes, yes, proper, (Maude) What about your prospects, Kate? There's still going well for you in America?

Kate: It's going, Kate's going, Maude.

Maude: Very, Kate, very?

Kate: Oh, every Sunday I'm writing Maude, drawing over, pretending to send! Dear Maude, I miss you a lot — and the sheep — but I have found the best of a profession called Kate.

Maude: Oh, every Sunday, too, isn't it?

Maude: Every day?

Kate: I'm writing to Ted every letter.

Maude: Poor Ted!

Kate: He's just laid up.

Maude: I hope he is. Otherwise, he'll have lots of himself all over the place.

Kate: He's going to fight. Maude will miss him.

Maude: (sings) (sings)

Oh, mother, I'm going to fight for the King
Oh, mother, the bells are starting to ring
The bells they are ringing, the drums they are sound!

In a month and a half I'll be here in the ground!

Kate: He's going to do his best.

Maude: And I shall do mine. Shoulder arms and march away!

Kate: As far away as possible.

Maude: (sings) (sings) (sings) (sings)

Says mother, send me the shoe, Jack, send him an old shoe.
They Jack and me on a separate path.

Maude: (sings) (sings) (sings) (sings)

Kate: (sings) (sings) (sings) (sings)

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Maude: (sings) (sings) (sings) (sings)

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DANCE SPECIAL

William Shoubridge, Sydney & New York; Alan Brissenden, Adelaide

BALLET '78

William Shoubridge

In Sydney this year from November 2nd to November 4th there will be, in the Opera House, a gathering of all the performing dance companies in Australia brought together under the title of *Ballet '78*.

Whether the season has always played in Canberra under the aegis of the Canberra Theatre. Just why the change should come about now I'm not sure. Presumably it's because the Opera House offers scope for a larger audience to look at the different companies, it costing more than does the Canberra Theatre.

This year the companies taking part will be the Australian Ballet, the Dance Company (NSW), the Australian Ballet Theatre, The Queensland Ballet and the West Australian Ballet. New to the venture this year, and hopefully from now on a permanent component, will be the Aboriginal Dance Theatre from Queensland. Only the Dance Company and the Australian Ballet will be presenting works especially created for the event: the other companies offering works that are already within their respective repertoires. Financial difficulties (amongst other things) making it impossible for them to present works.

Franking this depression, the original idea for the Ballet Festival was to act as a showcase for new and/or promising indigenous choreographers. It was an opportunity to see works performed out of the 'workshop' situation, to see them and discuss them and to talk with their respective creators. Now it has changed its emphasis onto the companies as such. Now presumably what we will be asked to comment on will be the differing and relative qualities of the dancers within each group and the overall 'image' they are projecting. It would seem that there aren't any new faces around north showing off.

It is also noteworthy that only the national and major state companies are represented: the smaller, ad-hoc and ' fringe' companies like the Dance Exchange and the One Dime Dance Company aren't even getting a look-in.



WA Ballet Company's *Night Songs*. Photo: Bill Rogers.



ADT's *Midwintergarden*. Photo: David R. Simmonds.

To a certain extent, even the new works are hardly in the way of being unknown quantities. Graeme Murphy will create something new for the Dance Company and his 'style' is already familiar in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane and, worse, the only total unknown (to me at least) is Gerard Scherer who I'll be choreographing on the Australian Ballet.

Perhaps the various companies don't even look in the current choreographers, perhaps they can't find them: perhaps there aren't any. Maybe I'm judging the whole venture in the wrong way. Sydney at least has never seen the companies from Queensland, Western Australia and the Victoria/South Australia shared Australian Dance Theatre.

BALLET '78 — A MAJOR GATHERING

and it will be a fine opportunity for audiences to acquaint themselves with them.

The whole Festival will also be an excellent opportunity for the companies involved to meet, see and appraise each other, for the dancers to discuss differences and similarities and for critics and Artists' directors to get an indication of where the dance in this country is going at the moment. It isn't very easy. The companies in a given national work is evolving, there isn't the famous cross-fertilisation here that there is in Europe and America. In some ways that's good, it gives those involved the chance to formulate their manner and style in their own time and according to their own traditions. It can also hold back a lot of growth and inhibit stimulation from other styles and the sense of competition.

A Dance Festival cannot, however, be judged in the same way as say the National Playwrights Conference, the logistics are more involved. It is one thing to sit down and pull apart a script and another thing to create a ballet with a body of dancers out of the air as it were, especially if there is no great chance that those works will be picked up and put into a repertoire. One hopes of course that this sort of "work in progress" hasn't will happen but, within the short space of the Festival, with the bother of setting up the Opera Theatre for the various performances and the time taken up with rehearsals, I doubt if there will be much opportunity.

From what I gather, there is going to be a seminar of some during the event where dancers and invited critics (including Clive Barnes) will be able to discuss the works and argue the case about the state of Australian Dance. As with every kind of Festival of this sort most of the interesting and fruitful discussions will be made away from the stage, during those chance discussions and seminars.

On paper it looks like a fairly wide cross section of works are going to be performed. The Australian Dance Theatre, constituted in 1975 under Jonathan Taylor will present *Phibbergydder* — a drill piece of colonialism choreographed by Taylor. The ADT is essentially a "modern" company put on, gathered at least from past evidence on classical technique. The ADT has a vast repertoire, with some very potent works in it. *Phibbergydder* however doesn't strike me as being either a very worthwhile dance piece or hardly representative of the ADT.

The Queensland Ballet based securely on a strict classical style will present Gertrude Wehler's *The Visitor* a piece that's been with them for some time but never went beyond that state's boundaries. The Queensland Ballet has a wide enough structure to be able to incorporate both such work as the Bourgeoise class, *Le Sylphide* and *A Little Bit of what you saw* by Leslie White. It being the only established company in Queensland it has perfect to be an ad hoc company. Wehler's *The Visitor* merges both contemporary and classical styles within a dramatic framework. Not all companies can or want to manage that. It will be

interesting to gauge their degree of success.

The West Australian Ballet will be bringing over *Night Songs* choreographed by Jolene Carroll, a piece which has already received attention and has been choreographed for most of the various companies in Australia. *Night Songs* is a lone piece for three boys and so goes according to the national explanation offered me, by the company and as such presents their entire company on stage.

The Western Australian Ballet like the Queensland group has to be eclectic, it has to offer a glimpse of as many styles and manners as possible. It has to cover as numerous geographic areas and for a lot of its audience, act as their first introduction into the dance world. The company also goes, like all the companies apart from the national one, dances and performs for schools. That company has a reputation that can spring from the healthy discussions of *Flower Festival at Grassano* to the "dramatic" stylisations of Peter Donnelly's *Prosecco*. It, again like the Queensland Ballet is hampered by having to make every performance a measure of styles and techniques and it has been proven that such artistic backgrounds rarely engender truly creative work.

It is unfair to prejudge of course, but I feel that this Dance Festival, as trying to keep its options open and its spectrum as wide as possible is in danger of being too diffuse to be any good.

The Dance Company as I have said will be presenting a new work by Graeme Murphy, currently the great White Hope of Australian Dance. It is the only one that is offered to chance to be totally contemporary in style and to follow on own light as to what it wants to perform, the style it is going to adopt and to choose the choreographers who are going to shape in definite, perceivable fates.

As mentioned earlier, The Aboriginal Dance Theatre has for the first time been invited to perform at a strictly choreographic Festival. The work to be presented involves tribal dances from Arrernte and are going to be appraised and judged, for better or for worse on purely dance terms. In the past such things have been a token gesture, an embarrassed shrug at our native dance heritage. Therefore this appearance is quite a breakthrough for them. The Aboriginal Dance Theatre has hopes of building upon its traditional places and gradually giving more choreographed works meaning especially for them and maybe with time finding choreographic talent within its own ranks. It has a shining example before it of what Arthur Mitchell in America fashioned out of the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Basically Ballet III is concerned with the companies it has at hand at the moment. It is trying to find a common arena for all these different styles and performing groups within the far flung environment here in Australia. It is not trying to do any ground breaking at the moment but rather to offer a chance for dancers to meet and work together, to see their groups and to offset the danger of having individual talent working in unproductive isolation.

AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Alan Brissenden

The Board and Management of the Australian Ballet had plenty of reason to feel pleased with certain aspects of the Adelaide season in August of this year. Anne Woodhams' new version of *Joan Lake* attracted full houses at the Festival Theatre and, more surprisingly, the second week's programme, all modern works, drew audiences averaging about 1600 in the 1827 seat auditorium. There was despite reviews which were less than rapturous for the first and the presence of an original work by an Australian choreographer in the second — the number of subscribers had increased, but so had the number of casual buyers of tickets.

It was clear from the opening night that the corps de ballet was dancing well, especially in the lovely party of Act I of *Joan Lake* and the act reminiscent of Act II. It was even more clear that Marilyn Rowe and Gary Newman in the leading roles were in need of a first act, dramatically interested producers to make them aware of the content of those roles to bring their role rapport with each other and to infuse some sense of urgency into their performances. Ross Striven and Michèle Kirkdale were in these respects much better particularly Striven, who even managed to do something with the clowny scenes in which the action just fades away, as if Miss Woodhams had had enough of all hallooing through the fourth act and kept for the ending without enough explanatory steps in between. Kirkdale is not yet completely enough equipped technically to explore the nuances of the most difficult of classical ballet roles, fine dancer though she is. Christine Walsh tackled it with an engaging sobriety which was right for Odette, but which she could not convert strongly enough into the hardness and guile needed for Act III — a *Redding Swan Process*, trying her wings, ably supported by a young Sigfried in *Crim Siebeling*.

On these performances, it appears that the company does not now have a balance of sufficient dramatic and technical accomplishment to present Odette Odette satisfactorily. This despite the fact that in her debut last year, when partnered by Kelvin Cox, Marilyn Rowe gave a performance that was as remarkable for its delicacy in the white acts as it was stunning for its brilliance in Act III. As well, in several other aspects, however small the production has lapsed. The characters in Act III were hanging precariously, there were wrinkles in the backdrops, the men needed a lesson in how to wear their gorgeous Renaissance clothes, and too often the dramatic atmosphere of the corps de ballet was scattered instead of being focused on the action.

Programme II showed the Krizan's

Symphony on D is a lasting success, neat, pleasing and just right for the nippy classroom that the young dancers of the company can handle well. Peter's Carmon doesn't wear so happily, despite Ross Stewart's easy and limber performance as the leading role, the ballet is too long and the French too dense. *Robbie's Afternoon of the Faun* had an excellent performance of cool sophistication by Ross and Nauman, with counterpoints by Ross and Birch and too much detachment by Kirkaldie and Seering.

And the one original work for the whole 1978 season — Graeme Murphy's *Tokson* as the revised version of *Pluppy* has shown, Murphy is a choreographer who needs to be continuously working in his ballet while they are in performance. Even though the Australian Ballet flew him to Adelaide for two days' rehearsal before it went on, *Tokson* is still, as it was at its premiere in Sydney, a rather muddled work with too little clear direction of thoughts and too much aimless running around. It was as if the choreographer, given so many people to cut, let be had to do something, anything, with them, but hadn't worked out just what. The most exciting Australian choreographer at present, Murphy was nevertheless not the right choice for the Australian Ballet this year despite Carroll's *Lotus Blossom* for the Australian Dance Theatre is far more satisfying than *Tokson*, more thoroughly thought out, more economical, more complete. Not that *Tokson* is an utter failure, the choreography for the two leading couples particularly is characteristically interesting and inventive, and indeed the performers.

But with just one work in a whole year, where is the encouragement to the development of dance in Australia that there should be? Just one work in a whole year which includes arrivals of *Pink Mel Garden*, and *Coppelia* and a *Knightslayer* by a visiting choreographer — an appalling record for the national company. It is bad for the audience, bad for the dancers, who are getting no infusion of creative ideas, and bad for the state of dance in the country as a whole.

In his report for 1974, the company Administrator, Peter Baker, remarked, it is essential that new and experimental works should be introduced from time to time. Like systems or languages these may need an acquired taste. But it may be to us to see that the public is given a chance to acquire that taste as painlessly as possible. Otherwise we would be talking down to our job! Four years later he had changed his view, saying that the dancers are classically trained that the public has shown a marked preference for the traditional classical and romantic story ballets. He went on, 'We cannot afford to disregard their wishes. This does not mean that we have conveniently to reject ourselves and concentrate only on 19th century works. Certain contemporary pieces based on the classical technique, such as *Onyx* or *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merry Widow* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, and indeed such masterpieces as *Glass Trolley* by Graham and John Butler's *Threshold*, both based on a 'true' technique will always be part of our



Marilyn Rowe (Clerian) and Gary Norman (Singh) in AII's *Swan Lake*

repertoire. But whether we should also be doing the way-out type of modern experimental work, sometimes consisting of obscure plot, sophisticated music, contractions and writhings) seems more and more questionable.

Particularly so, in recent years, a number of developing State dance groups who imitate modern techniques such as those of Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham have been catering for audiences with a taste for the avant-garde. We should not try to compete, for instance with the Australian Dance Theatre in Melbourne and Adelaide or with the Dance Company of New South Wales. But it is absurd to think of the Australian Ballet with its 60 regular and six guest artists, 'competing' with other

the Dance Company NSW or the Australian Dance Theatre, each of which has fewer than 20 dancers.

The Australian Ballet is the one national touring company, the only one to be seen in all States and abroad. It must accept the responsibility to develop ballet in all its aspects, to inform instead of merely indulging the current taste of its audience, and to fulfil the obligations of its culture to advance the art which it serves.

The new Artistic Director has a significant and challenging task, and must be supported in a forward looking policy by the Board and Administration if the company is once more to succeed artistically as well as financially.

Alex Brockenbush is Dance critic of the *Adelaide Advertiser*.

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AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE

Alan Brissenden

The renowned Australian Dance Theatre celebrated its first anniversary with a two week season in June at the Festival Centre's Playhouse, the best theatre in Adelaide to see this company. And, before the end of the fortnight, audiences had begun to build in a way which showed that these dancers were at last gaining the attention and understanding that their achievement demands.

They made their first appearance in May 1977 in the children's festival, 'Come On', with a lively presentation of dance history, *The Rise to Fame of Violet Smith*, which is now a regular part of their programme for schools. But their real debut was at the Opera Theatre in June, with an ambitious season of three programmes: the repertoire completely English — ten new and reproduced works by the Artistic Director Jonathan Taylor, and his chief associates, Joseph Scoglio and Julia Blakie, and two by other former Ballet Master colleagues Christopher Bruce and Norman Morris. There was no doubt in the minds of anyone seeing them that the new company was already technically polished, well groomed and intelligently able to express the content as well as the form of the works they were presenting, but audiences were then

After appearing with the other Australian companies in *Ballet 77* in Canberra, the Australian Dance Theatre scored country debuts in Victoria and South Australia — it is funded jointly by both states — and made its Melbourne debut in October, distinguished by Jonathan Taylor's new Australian work, *Ball Creek*. Developing his intention to an original local choreography, in November Taylor mounted a workshop season of seven new ballets at the Space, which produced an outstanding work by Jacqui Carroll, which should go into the repertoire, a successful comic ballet by John Cotton and a fast moving, lightweight piece by the visiting American Jane Sapphira. Only one of the seven, Tony Braxton's provocative expression of Australian attitudes to women, was a future Cheryl Scott's experiment with electronic sounds scored by the dancers as they moved on steel platforms was interesting rather than effective, but Pamela Buckman's solo for Joe Scoglio showed a choreographer at the making. The development of choreographers within the company will be slow and uneven, must be allowed to be made, but this season was a fine start.

Jonathan Taylor's dances for Tippet's *Midsummer Marriage* at the Adelaide Festival in March this year were dancing highlights of the opera, even though they did not bring out clearly enough the female production quality called for in the sexual relationship represented. The

dancers will unfortunately never be repeated because they were choreographed for a particular stage setting — a setting extremely dangerous to dance on, composed as it was of a series of tilted circular ramps, covered with banana, rising from a highly-polished slippery stage floor. Taylor in his choreography and the dancers in their performance coped so superbly with these extremes that one reviewer of the opera declared that the set was obviously designed for them. (It was not: two of the dancers had injuries during the final season.)

The company's own Festival season was a disappointment, as William Shakespeare has already noticed in an earlier *Therapeutic Adelaide* and Taylor himself admits in some extent, while pointing out that people he would like to get from America such as Glen Tetley, Harv Feld or Tanya Thayer, are all very busy and very expensive. Next year Christopher Bruce is coming to produce one of his current works, *Black Angels*, and choreograph another on the company. Bruce's *Workshop and Wings* are already among the most durable of the company's repertoire, and it was especially good to see *Wings* again in the recent Playhouse season. Its images of flight, its transmuting of relationships by putting them into an arena instead of a human made, have an effect which is both disquieting and reassuring. It reaches into the deeper recesses of consciousness in the way that great art and music do.

The other repertoire works in the two programmes were *Midwinterblades*, associated with more matter, and even better than before, *Ball Creek* — given for the first time in Adelaide and, in retrospect, satisfactory rather than stunning, *Sea's End* and *Sea's Secret* Ballet Victoria's first ever, and *Lilies* to the *Mojo*, a masculine, really funny work which has gained with repeated performance. The value of building the repertoire and nurturing the company as an ensemble is becoming very clear.

New in the first programme was *Wood Walk*, Julia Blakie's second work for the company, which has been included in the Melbourne season ending on 3 September. The music *The Body* is by Ron Green and Roger Walters of Pink Floyd, but the ballet begins with the sound of a body being dragged along a floor. A heavily pregnant young woman and her husband are on stage and are greatly assailed by a group of characters (called the 'Lumbies' by the choreographer) who represent the spiritual, water regions of the couple's dreams and emotions. The woman is taken away then returns, having had her child, the man himself absorbed in himself, so that there is a separation between them. The image of isolation develops as the man is isolated in a silk cloth by three others and then bundled up on a table towards the back of the stage. The woman is now surrounded by her own feelings and ideas, but she is reunited with the man again and they are taken by the six other dancers who sit there down on a sandy lounge in front of the telly, put their caps of one and go off. Surprisingly and unconvincingly the television set blows up. Left to themselves — their memories

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emotions and other selves outside the room — they learn to catch, offer and lose.

In developing her themes of human relationships Julia Blake spends too much time on arranging movement for its own sake and not enough on refining the expression of her ideas through the movement. The ballet has been shortlisted since its first performance, however, and the images may have become more sharply defined but it is still rather flilly and undeniably lightweight. Michael Pearce's pastel costumes and wavy walls, which finally drop down to separate the couple a reality from their non-material selves, are at times with the gentle air of the work as a whole.

There is more intellectual toughness to *The Seven Fates*, Jacqui Carroll's new work, choreographed to early William music (four of the Five Movements for String Orchestra, Op 5, 'Pensacopia, Op 1' and Nos 3 and 4 of the 'Ten Fancies for Orchestra, Op 6'), which had its premiere on 27 June. It begins with six dancers lying apart from one another on a darkened stage, curled around coils of rope which spiral in the floor. A man and a woman, separate from the group, gradually twist themselves and dance together, languorously, emotionally almost passive. The ropes are drawn up so that they dangle, just more than head high. The others emerge from their torpor one by one and relationships seem to begin to form. The man using the girls on the ropes, gently Pearce almost not, but never to more than considering point, conflicts develop, but fail to reach a climax. The potential plot are left alone on the stage. The man clowns, hanging upside down on the rope. The others return, the conflicts are renewed but suddenly the ropes fall with an ominous rattle and the dancers are left alone, it seems unsupported. They sink to the ground again.

This untidy and haunting ballet, which Melbourne may have to wait until January 1979 to see, is performed with sensitivity and extraordinary control by a group led by John Nibbel and Julia Blake. The choreographer, responding with great delicacy to the music, plays the dancers and the audience like a fast string of elastic, now tightening, now relaxed using a range of movements which blend into one another so subtly that the patterns seem continuously evolving, yet each section being allowed to be complete in itself. Like *Wings* *The Seven Fates* is a work which will become rather an its own thing with successive performances. Between its Adelaide and Melbourne seasons, the Australian Dance Theatre had the most successful country tour by a dance group in South Australia and Western Victoria in recent years, perhaps ever. In South Australia the sponsoring Arts Council was delighted with the average attendance of 246, the five towns visited were Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Broken Hill (NSW), Loxton and Millicent. At Millicent, in northwest Victoria, people had to be turned away and two performances were planned there on the next tour. Portland, Roburville and Horsham were the other Victorian centres visited and



John Blake in John Nibbel in ADT's *Seven Fates* Photo: David Sammons



John Nibbel in ADT's *Wings* Photo: David Sammons

after its Melbourne season the company went on to Albany, Wagga and Bendigo.

It would seem that the country is being more perceptive than the city in its appreciation, but word is gradually reaching those who enjoy dance and they are discovering that the Australian Dance Theatre really is good. After dancing in Brisbane for the first time and giving a 'Young Choreographers' season at its own

Balcony Theatre in Adelaide the company went everybody else at the Sydney Opera House for Ballet '78 before returning to Melbourne for a season at the National Theatre, 10-25 November, that time a workshop programme that don't be fooled — the Adelaide Workshop season at the Space last year was a full professional performance of new works, and all but one of them was worth presenting, and worth seeing.

THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET

William Shoubridge

New York, it would seem, has these days gone dance mad. There are now over five thousand discotheques in this city from the plush, lavishly-stained glass-domed Studio 54 and Regency's to the scruffy little loft in Soho or up on the Upper West Side. The *Turning Point* is one of the highest grossing ideas in the city (along with *Thursday Night Fever*) and two of the highest grossing shows on Broadway are *A Chorus Line* (well) and *Bob Fosse's new show "Dances"* (at which more later).

Just peruse some of the daily listings at the Ticketmaster outlets (you can't miss the papers of course at the moment) and on any one day there are over thirty different dance performances you can attend. There is always an obvious ballet company centered somewhere, from the Royal Ballet at the Metropolitan to the Ballet of the 20th century at the Pelt Forum. There are small "experimental" one man/one woman shows at these well named Soho and Upper West Side lofts and Dance Umbrella Festivals in Central Park.

And there, as always, right in the middle of it all at Lincoln Center is the resident crown in the proscenium, the New York City Ballet. It has been there so long that many people began to take it for granted and a few years ago the NYCB was passing a crisis with musicians strikes and falling subscription flow that has changed (except for the strikes) the black market in having a field day in tickets at the New York City Ballet (there is a constant queue at the State Theatre box office and why? Because the NYCB has a "Staff Dancer" one of the greatest male dancers in the world today and one of the stars of *The Turning Point*, Mikhail Baryshnikov).

NYCB audiences these days are strangely divided. There are those who have stuck with the company for years, knowing it to be one of the best in the world, and there are those people, the apocryphal newcomers from the American Ballet Theatre who have transferred their affections to the City company and are there in season when Baryshnikov makes even the slightest flick of his hand in the back row of the cast of say *Symphony in C*. These newcomers are outraged at the fact that Baryshnikov (and the off stage back row of *Symphony in C*) has place in an empty stage where they will tell you, not smiling down at his talents to fit in with much lesser dancers. But this is what Baryshnikov expects when he first joined the company (along with his headliner) it was not expected, over that he dance alone. The thing that comes first at NYCB is the NYCB and the NYCB is the choreography of George Balanchine (and Jerome Robbins).

The fact is however that Baryshnikov is such a great talent that he can't be in the back row long, already he changes the lead part of *Frank* in *Copacabana* and is learning a part in *Robbins' Dances at a Gathering*.

He is in fact a principal, not a corps member. But when it comes to that mixture of team work and group precision, *Agon*, he must bend his talent along with the rest, bury personal magnetism and become a glass through which the glory of the movement becomes paramount.

"I am thirty now so there are a few years left", said Baryshnikov, when he first announced that he would be joining NYCB "I had the name (Larungard Kirov) meaning that Balanchine himself had. I just want to dance the great works that Mr B has created."

There is also the hope that Mr B will create great new works on him, but here the danceworkers say Kirov training is one thing, but Mr B has changed the face of dance, in America at least. When you think of American dance, sleek, speedy and cool, you are thinking of Balanchine dance.

Still others say that Mr B's creative fire is practically out, there hasn't been a real masterpiece since the 1970 *Serenity* Festival *Wishes Concerto*. Anyway, they go on with reluctant glee, ballet for Mr B has always been women. Female dancers have always got the best parts in a Balanchine work, they are the ones that dance in *Agon*, that get the best dancing in *Scorch Symphony*, *Serenity* and *Agon* and *Robbins' Scherzo* *Quartet*.

The fact is that every dancer in a Balanchine ballet gets to "star" somewhere, but the real star is the choreography and no change of personnel will alter that. In the past, great dancers have died and their parts have died with them, that will never happen with Balanchine choreography. Just to watch performances for one work with this company is to realize the enormous compass of Balanchine's addition to the art of dance.

I saw Peter Markham Apollo (trained in 1934) and wondered at the severe classical grace as I always do, but noted the unique quality that Markham brought to it. He is every inch the God of the Muses and a specially endearing with Roy Macero in *Terraplane* who gently and chivalrously instructs him in the forms of Godhood.

To see Michael and Suzanne Farrell together in *Chaconne* (Balanchine's ballet to the dance music from Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*) is again to dwell in the total crystalline flow of never made visible motion to almost see the dance spontaneously capture the ethereal harmonies of Gluck's masterpiece as the only accompaniment possible.

The work opens with the couple at the back of the stage going through slow, heavy, muscular movements as if from a freeze. Then Orpheus steps among them, yet never comes in, really alone in the loss of his beloved. The chorus departs and to the requisite Bole solo Eurydice (Farrell) enters and arches out to touch Orpheus as if across a precipice. Her glance is always downward and he leads her into a series of windmill lifts without actually looking at her. She slides and sinks alongside and around him as if she were a ghost and then departs. He walks about the stage as though abandoned in an empty universe. That is it — and it takes your breath away.

Markham later dancing *Frank* in the Balanchine/*Robbins Copacabana* (this also appeared in *The Turning Point* as the first Russian ballet to be performed) brought to the role a rough, pleasant humor, making this last look like some happy but thick doll. Baryshnikov later dancing the same part played him as a seamy, always underfoot, but something of a colorful lady killer, dancing in his dancing and winning in his character. He seemed quite at ease here, but story ballets are what he is used to. Seeing him later with *Shat Cook* and *Victor Castelli* in Mr B's *Kammermusik No 2* (two hands with musical and in the *Four Temperaments*) one was aware of the enormous concentration he was pouring into trying to master the style. The speed of *Kammermusik* got to him and in places he was down a couple of beats behind, but that is because of his training. Kirov training allows a dancer time to regain center and prepare for the next phrase, *Kammermusik* especially allows none of that. It's a unapologetic athletic piece. The ballet, a dancer comes out of a double cabriolet and the straight into a glissade across the stage or a sky high jeté, etc all done on the ball of the foot, no wonder the man's got insomnia.

Same goes for Merrill Ashley in *Baldy's Agon*. The speed of this homage to a Queen with the ballet comes from, I think, Don Carlo, a phenomenal there are times when Ashley's foot work, steel hard and electric becomes a blur, times when you're sure she'll open right off the stage from the momentum of her previous tier. She's the latest wonderchild of the NYCB, taking over from where Cleyve Kurland (now with the ABT) left off and she, as far as it is possible, is a star.

But everywhere there are stars as I said, like Helge Tomasson and Karen Arakelian in the Cuban section from *Agon* both of them so loose and dynamic and well, hey, O there is Juan Pina Bonafina and Patricia McBryke in *Robbins' Concerto in G* (Hovad especially in the chit, liquid flowings of the wings and the busy, cute brevities of the opening movement).

And then there is *Dances at a Gathering* (not by itself, one of the most dramatic ballets ever created). Nothing but an open sea, a pattern in the corner of the stage and ten dancers meeting at a place for the real purpose of dancing, getting to know each other and passing on signatures of their selves and their "relationships" in the most unmaking manner. Baryshnikov once said "that to dance is to make love in the most elegant and beautiful way possible and seeing *Dances* is to realize this. We the audience know nothing about these people when the work starts, but as the Chopin music unfolds to do these over so real people and their experiences. The audience works hard creating the scenes (whatsoever they may be) but they do so willingly. Would that this work could become part of our experience here in Australia.

After eight with the NYCB the rest of New York seemed pale. *Agon* was a kind of sopping rubbish, *Of the Twentieth Century* lumbered along in its irredeemably elegant way, and *Shakespeare* was a

levy the tapster but that's about all. But right after this was one with a bar pattern in a role just down from Zebur's world famous delicatessen and oh yes, Bob Fosse's *Dances*. What a show, what songs, one is drained just watching it.

Dance all the way from balladic pagentry (not very well done), right through courtship tango and disco jazz. A high spirited show, a happy antidote to the heavy message of *A Chorus Line*.

I left New York elated but tired with the

glamor of the place and headed off to Europe (Germany) to see Bieart's company, The Hamburg Ballet and Chereau's production of Wagner's *Ring* at the Bayreuth Festival, but that will all have to wait till next month.

Peter Martin as Pucko in the Balanchine/*Dandyls Coppelia*
Photo: Martha Scope



Problem month for AO: Seymour and UNSW successes

After the long string of sorry season examples reported previously in these columns, it was possibly only to be expected that the Australian Opera would take a little during September — and so it did. No new productions were promised during the month, only revivals of *La Bohème* and that old workhorse of a double bill, Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Neither opening night was anything like an unqualified success, and things at the end of *La Bohème* at least, were destined to get a good deal worse before they got better.

This year's AO *Bohème*, Leona Mitchell slipped an unwelcome share of the blame in some critical quarters for the failure of this latest of *Bohèmes* to succeed dramatically in opening. No doubt her performance imposed on the production added to, along with everyone else's but she was far from solely responsible for the shortcomings of the first night. For much of the evening her Rodolfo Lombroso Farina, seemed more interested in what was going on in the third row of the dress circle than in her failing health which must be after all, a hard point of any thoroughly successful *Bohème*. The

horror story among the bohemians, a total fail to the wrong side of the post, barely continued in the first act and not at all in Act IV, where it is even more important dramatically. Things were not helped by the fact that Alan Light's Alcindoro was not in good voice in independence which clearly meant Edda Pina's Musetta.

Before I returned to a mention of *La Bohème* on September 21 both Farina and the scheduled Marcello for the entire season, John Pongle had been temporarily felled by illness. Pongle was replaced by the mainstay as was Light, and Anne Austin, felled by the stage with her thoroughly successful series of *Affonso* in *La Traviata* was playing Rodolfo to great effect. He still has some way to go before he could be deemed a thoroughly relaxed actor, but he was certainly conveying the impression on his audience that he cared about Mimì, and he was relaxing to the other bohemians, and he was singing very well indeed.

This year's conductor, Mark Elder, clearly did not have enough rehearsal time before opening to get *Bohème* to the level of excellence he would have liked, and there were musical flaws

then which had been missed out thoroughly by my casual visit. It is to be hoped this talented young Englishman, who can be seen conducting south in Australia a few years ago in a production of Edward Elgar can be attracted back to Australia regularly over the next few years, for there is no doubt he is an extremely positive influence on the standards of the Australian Opera.

The revivals of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* under the direction of David Besterman were played by illness and uncertainty in the rehearsal period, particularly in the latter department where Robert Donald and his father, Donald Smith, were scheduled to share the limelight.

Donald did sing in a special pre-premiere performance but was struck down between then and the official first night, forcing Raymond Byrne to fill in on very short notice the night after filling in for Lombroso Farina as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. One must sympathize with him for having to perform two such major roles on consecutive nights when he had not been scheduled to sing either that year, and in the event he only managed to get through them with



Edda Pina (Musetta) in the AO's *La Bohème*

Photo: William Moulden

extensive resistance from the principal. Even allowing for that, though the lack of dramatic tension between Bess' Tawako and the Sansone, Elizabeth Perle's, was economical. Both made some nice sounds, but never did the mechanisms of the piece approach the gripping level which it must if this opera is to succeed as theatre.

Indeed, the performance lingers in my mind mostly for the excellent Aida of Noriko Wakisaka, who sang very well indeed and came up with the most interesting acting performance I have yet seen from her. He has been usually disappointing in the chorus since leaving the Queensland Opera Company to join the AG, and certainly made much of this opportunity.

The Pappageno was infinitely more successful all round than the first half of his double bill. Donald Smith, despite one or two worrying moments early in the piece, proved to be in his usual form overall and as thoroughly convincing dramatically as ever in what is unquestionably one of his best roles. The old daffling Smith scored his last score of his impact during his second period of non-employment, and it is to be hoped we will be seeing more of him on stage in the next couple of years than we did in the last couple. In this regard, it is welcome to note that he is scheduled to sing both Dick Johnson in Puccini's *Gel of the Golden West* and Florentine in Puccini with the national company next year.

John Shaw was an excellent form also as Tawako on the opening night of *Pappageno*, but as overall tension and accents were particularly enhanced by Diana Pike's Modita. There is not a large or conspicuous or particularly beautiful voice, but it is accurate and not unpleasant, and that is an excellent screen. This has always made her Shikama in *La Bohème* a pleasing contrast to Mann's voluptuous sounds, and — though she is the only female of importance in *Pappageno* — with the part of Modita as well. In particular, the character had more impact than in any other production of this piece I have seen because of the explicit way in which Pike conveyed fear of Cusco's rising power at an earlier stage of the play within the scene.

Smith, of course, is himself marvellous at portraying the barely controlled mounting hysteria of Cusco through an alternation of sudden vulgar outbursts, and nothing except expertly barely controlled gestures. Unlike most Modita I have seen. Pike appeared to be legitimately related to death in her beautiful tone of mind, composed herself selflessly for the few bars just before her demise when she consciously attempts to direct Cusco by stepping aggressively back into her friend's role.

Paul Ferris was also an interesting newcomer to the secondary role of Beppifalafalanga. Carlo Felice Ciliano in whose role it has fallen to conduct more than a few shows of the AG's more obscure rabelais performances during the past few years, proved most well suited to Pappageno through Cusco and was able to follow with a similar reading of Papp.

There were some not new doubts in director



Donald Smith as Cusco in the AG's *Pappageno*. Photo: William Morley

David Johnston's handling of the crowd in Cusco the children, devout girls and usually boys, in particular. Papp was more difficult in detail though not spectacularly original as Donald Dugby's 1972 designs for both productions continue to wear very well indeed, proving themselves thoroughly adaptable to any directorial interpretation that may be superimposed on them.

Beppifalanga was also director of the first series of performances of *Modita's Lasso Miller* presented by Roger Cavell's University of New South Wales Opera early in October. By and large John Roberts' designs were good though one could perhaps have done without the superficial fuss on stage right and hoped for more explicit visual recognition of the useful/present dichotomy that is so vital to the dramatic structure of the piece. The set was successful in the way it enabled to reveal the interior of Miller's cottage integrally into abstract for the dramatic circle and vertical perspective thus framed the performing area, a little confusing for the uninitiated about the domain of the action throughout, apparently intended to symbolize the antithetical father of the male romantic lead and Miller in turn, but not shared consistently enough to coincide with the demands of the moment.

This vocal and acting bonus of the production was shared by Lyall Brown as Miller and Beverly Bryson as Lasso. I find not previously successful. Brown, and found his most precise absolutely using the intensity of the role demands as well, he reduced the full-throated baritone warmth that characterizes so many Verdi fathers. I also enjoyed Angela's Lasso for the same reason: usually, she was in fine form, dramatically unfailing in her portrayal of the conflict of final character and love for her chosen man.

Lasso succeeded was John Mann's Rodolfo, which was markedly free of vocal sound and matter of dramatic manner than one would have had. Neil Ellison's Wren was realized

effectively in its overall parameters, but could have done with a little more explicit self assurance and vocal power. Penelope Bruns' Umberto Federico was excellent, both vocally and dramatically.

Rhys Daniels Costa Walker lacked the stature necessary to sustain effectively with Diana's Miller. Roger Cavell's musical direction was less visually flamboyant than it has been sometimes in the past, but the results — aided by his usual talented castings of Sydney Symphony Orchestra and its SSO players in the wind departments — were musically most interesting.

Perhaps the ultimate accolade that can be paid to such an intensely demanding budget performance of a relatively little known work by a great composer is that it can display the merits of the piece so clearly as to prompt wonder as to why by producing companies with greater resources, and this *Lasso Miller* did just that.

Beppifalanga's production, while it proved excellent, worried me here and there for an excessive tendency to require actors to heat into the music, and for permitting the scenes on in Miller's cottage to overflow their topical visual parameters by spilling over into the set man's land of the central stage area.

Finally, brief mention must be made of that rapidly rising star of Sydney's musical ferment, the Seymour Group, for its production of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* last in September. This was only the last part of a triple bill featuring also a new piece by Alexei Ballo and the recent debut of Carl Vow's music for Graham Murphy's highly successful dance piece, *Papp*, which was performed as successfully by the NSW Dance Company earlier this year.

Though some attempts were made to enter the opening two-thirds of this programme into legitimate music theatre, and the Pitt Street Congregational Church is a wonderfully excellent venue, the final piece never really took off and the *Papp* were clearly counts lightning up and perhaps compensation of it is even to win a legitimate place for mail out of its original fully danced context.

Stoned by a superlative interpreter of the spoken text, Natalie Blair and a couple of fine instruments who, notably Ed Presson on the usually important violin, the *Soldier's Tale* which formed the final third of this programme was well worth waiting through the other two. It did not today one for a moment that Blair, a female, was concerned with portraying the soldier and the devil and the satanic — all of whom might quite properly be assumed to be male. Apart altogether from considerations related to male chauvinist piggery like was such a superlative performer is to consider any considerations of more sex.

They were identically flawed, more rather blatant in the instrumental backing, but as no stage was the performance really, under the direction of Vincent Piffaro, last than acceptable. Its overall impact was memorable.

The Last Tasmanian — an extraordinarily interesting and moving film



Tasmanian Aborigines as seen by the French expedition which visited Tasmania in 1802

Drawing by Péral and Lescaze

Many people will have expected Tom Hapton's film, *The Last Tasmanian*, to be found on the nation's television screens rather than in the commercial cinema where it is now appearing. But Hapton obviously sees it as a film rather than a television documentary and it is slowly making its way around Australia, from West End in Hobart to the Longland in Melbourne to the Opera House Music Rooms in Sydney and so on. It is a film which, if it becomes a popular success, will have depended on word of mouth support rather than advertising hype. Even if Arta Productions, which made it, could have afforded the big splash, such a splash would have been quite unrepresentative of the subject.

The subject. Well as the title does somewhat more than hint, the film is about a dark period in the history of the colony when the Larras, some age people of Tasmania were at the mercy of soldiers and convicts and soldiers and convicts, with the result that they disappeared off the face of the earth. The author of the last round-up was the carpenter George Augustus Robinson called the *Consolidator* appeared to settle differences between the European residents of Tasmania, which was even wilder and rougher and more cut off than it is now — and the Aborigines.

Robinson was a do-gooder: he was the son of a bricklayer, a man converted by prayer from the east end of London, raised above his station by how many public servants served his circumstance. He thought it his duty to Christ and to educate the three hundred natives

who were left of the four thousand or so who had been around thirty years earlier. He settled them on Flinders Island, by then given good gave them new names and left them there till 1847 when only four had survived.

Three long hair were transferred to Oyster Cove near Hobart. They died off in miserable circumstances and in 1869 there was only one, Truganin. Seven years later she too was dead.

Tasmanian life is well documented and Hapton's film is not really about her. It is about what happens to weak people who get in the way of strong people and it is also about the long painful sociological search in which a Welsh Australian sociologist and poet became, thirty six years old Dr Rhy Jones, with his colleague Jan Allen, found out about the mysterious Aborigines of Tasmania: their way of life and the probable reasons for the fact that their civilization had become "lost" several thousand years behind that of the mainland Aborigines.

Rhy Jones and Hapton, with Arta money and contributions from the Tasmanian Film Corporation, the Australian Film Commission, the BBC, the French government and a French production organization, not to mention Culberty Schreyer put together an interesting and moving film without actors although Rhy Jones can make quite an impressive effort by simply walking towards a midden on the coast but rather with a combination of landscape and drawings and photographs and much appalling historical data offered without comment. However

The Tasmanian Aborigines had originally had a rather nice relationship with Europeans. In 1802 Napoleon sent an expedition to explore and perhaps try claim to the territory, in the mood of conquest. A doctor and naturalist named Francois Peron killed his diary with descriptions of the blacks and collected 100 000 animal specimens (among them 2 000 birds) unknown species. An artist, Nicholas Martin Peron made pen and ink portraits of the Aborigines and the animals.

These drawings are wonderfully accurate. The blacks are not depicted as really black but cocoa-brown, with long graceful limbs, usually hair, and dancing eyes which hold a glint of a smile. There is often a sly expression on their large mouths, opened at the corners. They wore no clothes.

The *Last Tasmanian* was made in English, French and Welsh (the last an equally comical courtesy of Rhy Jones, who speaks the language. Arta Productions had to take this on trust, as nobody was able to check what he was saying).

It had a world premiere on the BBC in June last and since and has been sold at the U.S. Canada, France, the Scandinavian countries, eastern Europe and Yugoslavia.

Tom Hapton's kind of film making — *The Tulip Plant*, *Up a Hill*, *Make a Million Beyond the Black Swamp* — is more picturesque or less appeal and the films is by no means kinder to his countrymen. Or worse, and now

Film Australia Interpreting Australia At Home and Everywhere

THE FILM MAKERS

Film Australia is the production arm of the Australian Film Commission and operates from studios in Lindfield near Sydney. Its films tell Australians about themselves, the world about Australia and Australia about the world.

The studio complex contains editing rooms, sound stage, theatres, dubbing suites and has a staff of over 130. It is a centre of film production of considerable magnitude. Dutch film producers visit, writers, directors, composers and technicians are regularly engaged to augment the organisation's capacity. The studios' output averages sixty films a year, varying widely in length, style and subject from features to cinema and television through documentary to short and student film. About twenty-five audio-visual programs are also produced each year.

Film Australia's productions have won a great number of prizes and awards in international competitions. In 1977 an animated film, *Canoe*, given recent distinction, sponsored, gained a Hollywood Academy Award. Between July 1977 and June 1978 explores international and new Australian awards were won. In August of this year a Film Australia production, *The Growing-Up Week*, took the major prize in the documentary category of the 1978 Australian Film Awards.

A number of these films were governmentally sponsored and are an important part of Film Australia's on-going program. They include programs on immigration and training, road safety, Aboriginal affairs, social and health services, drug abuse, immigration, consciousness, management and defence output. Its activities with funds voted annually by Parliament, Film Australia produces its own National Program on far-ranging subjects relevant to Australian life which include history, education, microscopy, flora and fauna, tourism, sport, music, art, sociology, environment, ethnography and cultural filming.

ASIAN NEIGHBOURS

Over the past eight years, Film Australia has produced a series of films on Asia as part of its National Program to acquaint Australians with the lifestyles of its new neighbours. The Asian Neighbours series includes films on Indonesia, Thailand and India. It has been widely acclaimed for its capacity — without editorialising — to give an understanding of the cultures of different countries. Its attention is based on careful research: the films have in many cases won critical acclaim to make up their own minds about what they are seeing.

FILM AUSTRALIA IN CHINA

China is now to be part of the Asian



Director of Film Australia's China series, Bob Ransbury

Neighbours series. A Film Australia team, headed by director Bob Ransbury, is currently making one of the most comprehensive group of feature-length films ever attempted in China. The team has been given the opportunity to cover in depth and variety aspects of China hitherto unseen by both Western and Chinese audiences.

Preparation for Film Australia's China project included the producer, Suzanne Baker, studying the Chinese language for two years and many months of research by herself and director Bob Ransbury before they visited China earlier this year. Film Australia refused to be allowed to film each subject in a different area in order to give an idea of the variety of China's landscape. This request was automatically met. Five of the films are approximately twenty-seven minutes long with a sixth, a language teaching film, ten minutes.

THE RUSSIANS

In 1977, with the unprecedented cooperation of the Soviet State Committee for Foreign Television, Film Australia made *The Russians* on locations throughout the Soviet Union. This is a series of three documentary firsts in length films in television history. The purpose of these films is to answer the simple question: How do the ordinary Russians live? The first film deals with the life of people living in cities. The second with rural life and life in the New Frontier Siberia.

The third deals with three important people — the people who exert great influence on ordinary Russians: the director of a coal mine in the Don Basin, the secretary of the Communist Party of a great fishing enterprise in Siberia and the Trade Union Chairman of a ship-gear factory in Minsk. *The Russians* was produced by Tom Macfarland and John Alfonsi and directed by Arch Macdonald.

The final part of the series takes viewers out of the cities for a remarkable no-holds-barred look at one of the most sensitive and most revered aspects of Soviet Society life in the Colours Fair.

NOTABLE PRODUCTIONS

1977/1978

Over seventy productions during 1977/1978 include the three television films: *A Good Thing Going* and *Six Four West*. At These drama productions were made in co-production with the Channel 7 Network.

HOSPITALS DON'T BURN DOWN (a medical film) is a disturbingly realistic film about a fire in a high care hospital made in a training film by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It has standard action made and overseas interest and sales, and has won awards at international festivals. It is a Film Australia production made by Kangaroo Productions Pty Ltd. *THE CLAIM* (a historical drama) is a production of the processes of industrial negotiations in a vividly discussed film the progress of a log of claims is followed from its inception in the work place, through to many stages of direct negotiation with the employers, to the process of Conciliation and Arbitration. Produced by Film Australia for Australian Trade Union Training Authority.

BELONGING (a musical) is a film intended for students in the social sciences and accurately portrays the lives of four men in a small New South Wales country town, and their struggle of friendship and acceptance. *THE AUSTRALIAN EYE SERIES, NO 1* (5 films — 45 minutes) was produced in collaboration with the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales. These films examine in detail five important Australian paintings.

A SMALL BODY OF STILL WATER (a musical) A body water pond a small body of still water, light bloom and scattered under the microscope. Director Phil Mierow's camerawork by the use of microscope photography, looks deep into a pond and produces a fascinating film on the life in and around its edge.

At the 1978 Australian Cinema photography Society Awards, Director Phil won the "MILLIE" — Cinematographer of the Year Award, and the Tripod Award in Category Two for his distinguished work on *A Small Body of Still Water*.

WHERE THE FILMS GO

Film Australia's productions are sold and distributed through the Marketing and Distribution Branch of the Australian Film Commission to cinemas, television, libraries, schools, universities and colleges, government departments and other interested bodies. Copies are lodged with all State and educational libraries and with the National Library. Videotapes of films are available for purchase and loaners for videoscopes make copying and repeatable. World distribution is handled by representatives in New York and London and by agents in other countries. Australian diplomats and trade missions have plans available for screening, so do many libraries throughout the world.

Greek for Actors

Aeschylus: The Oresteian Trilogy A Theatre Version, Rush Rehm. The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1977, hardback \$40.95, paper back \$4.95.



Yet, another translation of *The Oresteian Trilogy* would surely only stir the avowed imaginations of classical scholars, but this Orestes is different — from the start it was told to the theatre. Rush Rehm's translation of *The Oresteian Trilogy* (Hawthorn 1977) is designated 'a theatre version' meant to be put on stage and not on a library shelf. It should impress actors and directors as much as academics. Rehm's translation was undertaken for the Greek Theatre Project and was performed at Melbourne at the Prince Farley in May 1974, under the direction of James McCauley. In his introduction Rehm, a poet and Classicist states that his aim was to produce English and English that could be acted. His method was to work closely with the director and actors (Rehm has all acted in major roles in each of the three plays) in a spirit of 'collective scrutiny'.

Throughout the extensive rehearsal period the drafts were modified and reworked in collaboration with the actors and changes were still made during the performance period.

Rehm describes the consensus of making the translation both proper and playful as radical in its implications.

The translation is not only from Greek to English but from the page to theatre, the whole process bound together — there is no translation of the one version cannot generate or at least sustain performance'.

To come up with a viable 'theatre

version', Rehm began with two assumptions. It is crucial that the three plays are experienced as distinct theatrical events. 'Each (play) forces a new relationship with its audience and demands from it a different involvement' and secondly the chorus or lyric is not some shuffling jury on the side, but central to the meaning and action of the work. 'If the choruses fail the production is doomed'.

Both the translator and the director vigorously and imaginatively pursued these objectives and put themselves on the line by playing the three plays straight through. The production started at 4.30 pm each evening and lasted until 11 pm with an hour break for a meal between the first and second plays.

Keep before comparing particular speeches from Rehm's version of *The Agamemnon* with other translations (Philip Vellacott, Louis Macneil) the ribs of this one are clearly pronounced. Rehm utilised the strengths of everyday language interlarded with the processes of poetic metaphor and imagery and in addition sought something that could be said and in the saying made alive. Clytemnestra's famous speech describing the beauties which brought the news of Greek Victory home to Greece, leaps off the page as it did in the actual production. It begins with the dramatic single utterance: 'First' and bursts forth announcing the passage of the beauties in the alternating lines in which the actions, like the light darts from one point to another, they are followed by lines which spread the light till it is picked up in the next line by the next beauty.

CLYTEMNESTRA. From the cliffs of the Trojan coast the glow leapt the stars and on to the island of Lemnos. There a pure heart leapt into gold like the sun rising across the sea. And the message sped, mixed to blend, light carried in the water below, as if the line broke another and shimmered over the dark waves.

But it is in the choruses that Rehm's translation most radically departs from previous versions. He employs two quite distinct poetic styles to render the choros and these are signalled in this edition by the use of italics. Abandoning the formal structure of metrical response that characterises Greek lyric and the liberality which emphasises aphorism and objective comment, Rehm translated the rhetorical response sections into clear blank verse and as it were set the expressive imagination sections to verbal music. He was then free to weave complex internal rhythms and weight key words. Even so the page these sections look alive and moving. So in *The Libanotides* when Orestes calls on Apollo and Athena to defend him for the matricide of Clytemnestra, their response looks like this: CHORUS: Apollo: Athena: their strength will not save you. Daimon! forgetful your joy goes forever, a bloodless shadow after

we feast. Raised and larned but not for sacrifice, you must lead as while you live, bound in the chains of our dance.

CHORUS

The leading song: Come let us join our dance the singing, horror that guides the face of men straight down the paths of justice. Our wrath creeps over hands that are stained, leaving victims for the dead we exact the price of blood. Mother Night: MOONER who have we Mother Night the fledgling just the hare steals the covering from CUNY concerned by a mother's blood song of sacrifice Over the water modest and free The Power! hymn chime on the equal to water own.

In addition the events of the lyric are packed out and listed in the left hand margin, signalling the steps of the physical dance which accompanies the words of the lyric. Even for a reader this device clarifies the sense and direction of the choros' words. In the production role the layout of the text is clear and uncluttered, however the photographs by Suzanne Davies and Susan Newland documenting the production are tastefully crowded into a few glossy pages and lose both their impact and relation to the text. Rehm's introduction is both scholarly and refreshingly accessible and puts the translation firmly into the context of the performance that put it to it. The letter and spirit of Aeschylus' original is well served by Rehm's translation, he elucidates the text and interprets it for live performers and modern audiences.



Culture for the people

"Two commercial managements have suffered from the financial uncertainties undered by those anti-commercial cases who looked to the government or other philanthropic bodies for help. Little states better than yesterday's idealism."

The chaotic financial misadventures of the Old Tote this year, and, one gathers, the Role in The Wolf more recently, make this a startlingly topical comment. Applied to Australian theatre it could have two implications. One is obviously that the whole structure of short-term public funding is uncertain. Theatre companies have often asked for long term financial commitment from their funding bodies, such as universities used to enjoy, to make planning easier and give it a more secure base. Whether this would have helped the Tote is another question.

The other is the more alarming thought that there is something fundamentally wrong

with the whole concept of a publicly subsidised theatre which attempts to engage in expensive commercial activities, as was suggested by Douglas Hindell in these pages a few months ago. The comment above in fact comes from John Elsom and Nicholas Tansler's *The History of the National Theatre* (Jonathan Cape, rrp. \$24.95), wherein is discussed the long, tortuous history of the movement for a National Theatre in the UK. It is a book which should be read by everyone interested in theatre here. The issues of the inappropriate use of the power of subsidy by the government and of the subsidies themselves by the theatre, of artistic freedom versus bureaucratic requirements, of the preoccupation in the idea of 'culture for the people' have been discussed at length in England for the last 120 years. If Australians were to study the arguments it might clear a lot of dead wood in a public debate to which Matthew Arnold, Harley Granville Barker, Henry Irving, William Archer and others made valuable contributions nearly a century ago. As a brief example there is Barker and Archer's proposal, which is still of interest. They

wanted a non-profit, not-for-profit company with a large guarantee fund but no further subsidy.

"If a theatre freed from the burden of rent, etc., cannot at least clear its working expenses season by season, the probable deduction is that the management must either be culpably extravagant or condemned on some mistaken principle. A theatre which appeals to no public or to a very narrow one, cannot be a National Theatre in any sense of the word."

There was no mention of economic growth.

Also to be mentioned in this shortlisted review are the *Directory of Australian Arts and Organisations*, which is a useful reference work published by the Australia Music Centre, Theatre Profiles (3) Theatre Communications Group, NSW which is a directory of non-profit professional theatres in the US, giving statistics, a brief history and description of some 180 companies, and *American Plays for Young Audiences*, edited by Marisa Norbin and published by New Plays, an American firm specialising in plays for children and books about theatre in education.

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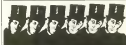
- ★ "DON'T LET SUMMER COME" directed by Olive Boddall & Anthony Wheeler
Opening November 4 for 3 weeks
- ★ "NO TIME FOR FIG LEAVES" directed by Gillian Owen Monday 17th & Tuesday 28th November only
- ★ A CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR REVUE
Directed by John Howitt. Gala opening on December 9
- ★ "BELONG ALONG ALONGA" — An original Australian children's musical play by Ronic Warren commencing January 3



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AUSTRALIA

A.C.T.

CANDIDERA THEATRE (40 7600)

Canberra Opera
The Magic Flute by Mozart
 Director: Bruce Bell. Conductor: Ayn Tomacka.
 Designer: Catherine Holt with John Mann as
 Tannos.

November 1, 3, 4
 Canberra Philharmonia Society
 (for further on the Arts)
 November 16, 18, 21, 23

CANDIDERA YOUTH THEATRE (40 0331)

The Seventh Seal by Ingmar Bergman
 Director: Joe Fleming
 Nov 21, 25, 30, Dec, 2

HIBISCUS THEATRE RESTAURANT

21 3111
Blue Hiss Productions
From Rags to Riches or Life without money is to be
stupid With Gordon Tait, Valerie Adams,
 Jill Todd, Tamara Sims, David Bacon, Mark
 Bond and Doreen Hines
 Friday and Saturday (evening)

THEATRE THREE (47 2122)

Canberra Repertory
Antony and Cleopatra by Alex Ross
 Director: Michael Lamberty, Designer: Russell
 Brown
 Nov 1, 4, 8, 11

TYPICAL THEATRE RESTAURANT (49 3411)

Visions of the Capital
 Friday and Saturday (evening)
 For entries contact Margaret White on 47 3782

NEW SOUTH WALES

ACTORS COMPANY (660 1561)

An Evening with Adolf Hitler by Dennis
 Campbell and Matthew O'Sullivan. Director:
 Matthew O'Sullivan. To 15 Nov
 Performer by Michael Randall and Elise with
 Anne Phelan. Director: Simon Agnew
 From 13 Nov

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES

(27 5011)
School Tours: Arranging Places New
 metropolitan area to 17 Nov
Wayne Russell Brown: multi-media multimedia
 metropolitan area to 17 Nov
 Adult Tour: Mike McCulloch. Sites — singer
 singing with Caroline Davis. NSW country
 areas to 26 Nov

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG

PEOPLE (669 9325)
 Seminars: Manning. Workshop — National
 Institute of Dramatic Art. From 10 am to 1 pm
 April 16 to 22, throughout Nov

AUSTRALIAN BALLET (21 0055)

Opera Theatre
An Afternoon's Gender premiere — presented by
 The Australian Ballet. Choreography: Frederick
 Ashton, music: Frederick Hertz
 8 Nov to 18 Nov

BALLET (26 0055)

Opera Theatre
The Australian Ballet Festival
 Programme 1: Thursday 3 Nov 7.30 pm and Sat
 4 Nov 4.30 pm. Aboriginal Dance Groups. The

Aboriginal Dance Theatre and The Queensland

Ballet
 Programme 2: Fri 3 Nov at 7.30 pm and Sat 4
 Nov 4.30 pm. The New South Wales Dance
 Company, The West Australian Ballet
 Company and The Australian Ballet

CANDIDERA OPERS

The Magic Flute by Mozart. Wages 10, 11 Nov

LES CURSUS PRESENTATIONS (258 3676)

Mike Jackson. 10th night, and four other
 primary and secondary schools in Wymba
 NSW. Revenue and South Coast delivers
 throughout Nov

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (258 1875)

Love of God by John Samson. Director:
 Garry Gordon. To 4 Nov
Flora and Ulysses by William Harey. Director:
 Robin Laverie with Rob Gordon, Andy Potts,
 Don Reid, Joanne Swanson, Maggie Pott, John
 Haggan. Throughout November

FRANK STRAINS BULL N BUSH

THEATRE RESTAURANT (31 3025)
Myrtle of Kentucky with Noel Murphy. Keith
 Bondi. Julie Pullar. Neil Brown and Alan
 Norman. Director: by Frank Strain,
 choreographed by George Gordon.
 (Continued)

GENESAN THEATRE (27 3031)

A Woman of an Imperious by Oscar Wilde
 with Tony Hayes. Marlene Harrell
 and Margaret Watson. Directed by Margaret
 Watson. Throughout November

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3011)

Over the Mountains by Robert Hoffmann,
 starring John Watson. (Continued)

KIRKILLIPOLIS THEATRE (40 1415)

Lyndell Hotel Wilson. Pott
The Over-the-Mountain with Rob Mann and
 Marlene Harrell. Director: Malcolm Francis
 with Paul Christie. Laura Gabriella, Rachael
 Young. Susan Asquith. Seven days.
 Throughout November

MARJAN STREET (49 1556)

A Cat in a Hat Long on adult performance.
 Director: Albert Duncan with Barry Gibney.
 David Nieldman, John Faxon and Raymond
 du Par. (Throughout November)

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA

237 1300
Music Room: Sydney Opera House
Project — The Complete Works of a Working
 Programme, presented by Richard Bradshaw. 5
 and 7 Nov

MAVATHEATRE (212 1071)

Canterbury Tales by Roger Ryan with Jane
 Selzer and John Hamilton. Director: Peter
 Williams. To 11 Nov

NEW THEATRE (259 3433)

Aschbach by John Forster. Director: Fred
 Sutton with Betty Helton. Throughout Nov

NIMROD THEATRE (499 5003)

Utopia A trial with the family by Carl
 Hübner. Director: Richard Wharton with
 Helen Mene. Robyn Noyes. Tara Bailey and
 Margaret Lough. To 16 Nov

Domenicus. Field. Kempt. Kempt with Robyn

Archer and John Gordon. Director: Ron Horle.

OLD WOTE (463 4135)

Drums Theatre: The Lady from Moscow — a
 George Fredrick Jones. Director: Ted Craig.
 Throughout November
Parade Theatre: Waverley House, by George
 Fredrick Jones. Director: George O'Leary, with
 Peter Collingwood. Jane Kenna. Norman Kay,
 Ron Harrison. Jane Hamilton and Anne Byrne

QTHEATRE. PENNETH (467 11 3718)

The Drunkard — a satirical. Stage
 adaptation by William H. Smith. Director: Ron
 Horle. Showing at Redwood Town Hall
 throughout November

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY

669 21 2828
John Paul Group: Rags and Riches. Director:
 Willy Russell. 2 to Nov

RYMOUR CENTRE (452-8124)

Two Playwrights by Samuel Beckett presented by
 Touring Theatre Company. From 11 Nov
Downstairs: 3 Nights in Freedom by Alexander
 Hynes. An international multimedia musical
 production by New South Wales Theatre of the
 Deaf. Director: Adam Saxon. Director: Yoda
 Tina. (throughout November)

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (25838)

Estimote Hall
The Rauscher Sculptures and Drawings
Exhibition. From the collection of the Museum
 Baden, from 12 Nov
The Art of Power Series. Exhibition and sale by
 international Dutch artist with works from his
 creative movement Asia and Siberia
 14 Nov to 7 Dec

THEATRE ROYAL (271 6111)

Antony and Cleopatra by Alex Applin. Director:
 Peter Williams with Alan Cusack. Barry
 Clayton, Carmen Daniels. Kate Forster.
 Ron Haddock. Steve Parsons. Peter Kewley
 and Julie Weaver. To 21 Nov
The Mamma House — one of Cyprus's most
 magnificent works. Starring Les Liffman
 From 25 Nov

QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (28 2348)

Project of Street Theatre by Neil Simon.
 Director: George Roberts with Catherine
 Smith. Hugh Taylor. To 11 Nov
November 8: One Year by Ron Clark and Sam
 Gilbert. Director: Anne Richardson with John
 Frey. Paul Laverie. Brian Laverie. Dale Osborne.
 From 13 Nov
Children's Theatre: The Nutcracker directed and
 danced by Carolyn Stone. To 9 Nov

1 A BOUTE (28 1627)

Historical Music by Bernard Shaw. Director:
 Richard Fotheringham. Director: Da Horrocks.
 To 14 Nov
Mr. Haddock's Christmas. Director: by Rita
 O'Toole. Director: Jennifer Haddock. Director:
 Long. From 24 Nov

CALABRATA

November programme 20 to 26 Nov
 DURING DOWNSIDE
 DURING. Arts Theatre. Director: Catherine
 Smith. From 14 Nov

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT (07) 2490
Five Five Christmas '79 David Gordon, House
 Smith Plaza (8 Nov)

HOLE IN THE WALL (08) 2464
No More Land by Harold Foster, director
 Stephen Barry, with Alexander May and Edgar
 Meiselle 11 Oct. 18 Nov, Wed to Sat

NATIONAL THEATRE (02) 2600
The Wages by Brendan Behan, director, Mike
 Morris, with Jose Sydney and James Hewitt 18
 Oct till Nov
No No Nostril by Steve Davis, Harbach and
 Mander director Edgar Meiselle 21 Nov 19
 Dec

NATIONAL THEATRE (02)
And Gaby directed by Richard Taitch and the
 Co
Drink the Mercury director, Andrew Ross
 Accompanied by Richard Taitch, director,
 Andrew Ross

THE REGAL (08) 1535
A Night of Siles with Heather Jackson and Eric
 Siles To 4 Nov

WABALLET COMPANY
Seller '79 Festival Sydney Opera House *Night*
 Songs by Jacqui Carroll 3-4 Nov

WAOPIA COMPANY
Pure Coast Hall (02) 1096
Tania by Patricia with Catherine David and
 Robert Bickmanoff 10, 11, 12, 13 Nov

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Name

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Age

1. Someone fond enough to be for Arnes (4, 8)
2. Told her differently and wanted to again (5)
3. Church, alternately for group song (5)
4. Doctor examining after Arnes for experience (5)
5. Address and Seaside's answer (6)
6. Editor's initial page (5)
7. Examples of luggage (5)
8. Footwear packs a punch (5)
9. Intention to show its efficacy again (6)
10. Headline for wine in Russia (5)
11. Zulu's crab-crawls African capital (5)
12. Quick decision to increase (1, 4)
13. For an experience with a difference, 1 last, (4, 7) (1, 4)
14. Not in and the Carats wear become a bullet (4, 8)

Down

1. Time remains to push and calm (4, 6)
2. Unpleasant to man has go brief in (5, 6)
3. Policy seems for legend conviction (4, 5)
4. Opposite of might be revealed as 14 down (4, 5)
5. Carry on, mission to article (7)
6. Right in play (4, 6)
7. Coming back the chuckard follows Jack (5, 6)
8. Spent a fancy for cushions (4, 5)
9. Oriental gift or food supply is not of postcard (4, 6)
10. Round of grapes when the light goes down (7, 8)
11. It has in company for our (5, 6)
12. Opposed to an advantage for the same (7)
13. Split the (4, 6)
14. Where the (4, 6)
15. Which offers much-changed (4, 6)



The first edition went down on November 25th and marks one year's first subscription to J4

Last month's answer